RENÉ GUÉNON

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Published in the *Veil of Isis,* then *Traditional Studies* (from 1936)

May 1928

- **D Eric de Henseler – *The Soul and the Dogma of Transmigration in the sacred books of ancient India***

(É. de Boccard).

The title of this work initially impressed us favorably because it contained the word "transmigration," not "reincarnation," and also because it suggested that modern conceptions had been entirely disregarded. Unfortunately, we soon realized that the question was actually being studied not "in the sacred books of ancient India," but simply in the interpretations given to them by Orientalists, which is quite a different matter. Moreover, perhaps because of the inadequacy of the word "soul," which can designate almost indiscriminately anything that is not "body"—that is, things as diverse as possible—the author constantly confuses "transmigration," or the changes of state of a being, with "metempsychosis," which is merely the passage of certain lower psychic elements from one being to another, and also with the "reincarnation" imagined by modern Westerners, which would be the return to the same state. It is curious to note that this term "reincarnation" only entered translations of Eastern texts after it was disseminated by spiritualism and theosophy; and we can affirm that, if there are in these texts certain expressions which, taken literally, seem to lend themselves to such an interpretation, they have only a purely symbolic value, just like those which, in the exposition of cyclic theories, represent a causal chain by the image of a temporal succession.

We should also point out, in this book, the misuse of the "historical method" so dear to academics: it starts from the preconceived idea that it is something akin to simple philosophical theories, a doctrine that must have formed and developed gradually, and it considers all possible hypotheses regarding its origin, except that of a superhuman "revelation" or "inspiration"; it is certainly no coincidence that the only solution thus deliberately dismissed happens to be precisely the only one that conforms to traditional orthodoxy.

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Amidst all this, there are nevertheless some correct views, such as the affirmation of the purely monotheistic character of Hindu doctrine; but, the author is very wrong to believe that the relationship of "supreme" knowledge and "non-supreme" knowledge can be assimilated to that of esotericism and exotericism, as well as to accept for the word *Upanishad* an interpretation which rests solely on the authority of Max Müller and which no Hindu has ever admitted: if we wanted to go into detail, how many other criticisms of this kind would we not find to formulate!

October 1928

• **D r Edmon Isnar – *The Wisdom of the Buddha and the Science of Happiness***

(Editions of the Extrême-Asie Review, *Saigon).*

This book is curious in that it clearly demonstrates what a mind steeped in Western prejudices can understand, or rather fail to understand, even with a certain degree of goodwill that is not in doubt, when it finds itself transported to an Eastern setting. Buddhism here is little more than a pretext for rather disparate reflections, in which "scientism" and "sentimentalism" alternately predominate; there is a bit of everything, even accounts of metapsychic experiences. Buddhism has nothing in common with any of this, nor with philosophical conceptions like those of Spinoza, Kant, or even Schopenhauer, nor with "evolutionism," "relativism," and the hypotheses of contemporary physics. However, the author does not seem satisfied with the purely material development of modern Western civilization; by what strange illogic, then, does he continue to accept ideas that are exclusively specific to this very civilization? On the other hand, there is an error which we have encountered both in this work and in that of Mr. de Henseler which we reviewed here recently (May 1928)* , and which it is necessary to point out: there is, whatever one may say, no possible assimilation between *Vedanta* or more generally Brahmanism and Buddhism; their relationship is and can only be that of an orthodox doctrine and a heresy which came out of it: it is therefore quite comparable to what is, from a very different point of view, that of Catholicism and Protestantism in the Western world.

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* *[The Soul and the Dogma of Transmigration in the Sacred Books of Ancient India.]*

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July 1929

• *The Dragon's Chosen One ("The Sparks")*

This anonymous fantasy novel, currently causing quite a stir in certain anti-Masonic circles, presents itself as a more or less "arranged" excerpt from the memoirs of a certain Clotilde Bersone, supposedly a high-ranking member of a "Grand Lodge of the Illuminati" who secretly directs all branches of universal Freemasonry, and who, following various misfortunes, was converted and took refuge in a convent. It is claimed that an authentic duplicate manuscript of these memoirs, dated 1885, exists in the library of this unnamed convent; and it is further stated that "these memoirs were notably copied, compiled, and enriched with remarkably insightful critical notes by Father X***, of the Society of Jesus, who recently passed away." The *journal Études,* whose editors should know what to expect, at least on this last point, has already warned its readers against what they quite rightly called "unhealthy fables," referring in this regard to the inventions of Léo Taxil and the "revelations" of the imaginary Diana Vaughan. There is, in fact, a strange resemblance between the latter and Clotilde Bersone, whose existence seems to us no less problematic; but there are some people who are incorrigible, who continued to believe Taxil's stories after he himself confessed to his lies, just as they still believe in the authenticity of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" despite all the clarifications provided about their true origin, and these people will undoubtedly give credence to this new extravagance as well.

Whether the author of the novel invented everything himself or was duped by others, it is quite clear, in any case, that this is a pure and simple hoax; moreover, deceptions of this kind, however skillful, always bear telltale signs that leave no room for misinterpretation for anyone even slightly familiar with certain matters. We have indeed noted several of these signs, particularly in the description of the organization of the supposed "High Lodge" in question: what, for example, are we to make of the title "Grand Orient" given to its leader, which, applied to a man, is entirely meaningless? What are we to make of this fanciful hierarchy in which the "adepts" occupy the lowest rank, below the "affiliates" and the "initiates"? We had the opportunity, in our article last February, to point out the misunderstanding that "laypeople" almost constantly make regarding the term "adepts," which actually designates the highest rank in an initiatory hierarchy; naturally, our author has not failed to fall into this trap! Even worse: Clotilde Bersone is quoted (p. 61) as referring to "the *Nekam Adonai* of the Rosicrucians" *(sic) ;* thus, this "initiate" of a higher Freemasonry was not even familiar with the degrees of ordinary Freemasonry!

While these characteristic details may, due to their "technical" nature, escape most readers, they should at least be

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struck by the rather excessive improbabilities offered by the "historical" aspect of the narrative. How could a truly secret organization have so many members, and so mediocre in every respect, and how, under such conditions, could no indiscretion have ever occurred to reveal its existence to the outside world? Who, apart from the naive people we were talking about earlier, can one hope to convince that the entire government personnel of the Third Republic indulged in diabolical evocations, and that narrow-minded politicians like Grévy or Jules Ferry, who certainly had nothing in common with the "Unknown Superiors," were high-ranking Luciferian mystics? But here is something even more decisive: in Chapter II of Part Three, Emperor William I is depicted, in 1879, as entirely unfamiliar with Freemasonry and completely ignorant of it; But the truth is that, at the time indicated, this so-called "profane" had been a Freemason for thirty-nine years! Indeed, it was on May 22, 1840, a few weeks before the death of his father Frederick William III, that he was initiated into the Grand National Lodge of Germany in Berlin; he received the three symbolic degrees on the same day, then was appointed member of the three Grand Lodges and patron of all the Lodges of Prussia; he also played an active Masonic role, and it was he himself who initiated his son, the future Frederick III, on November 6, 1853, and who designated him as deputy patron of the Prussian Lodges when he became king, in 1861.

This is therefore a historical error of considerable size, from which we can judge the value of all the other assertions, more or less unverifiable, contained in the same volume.

We would not have dwelt so long on this bad joke, if some, as we said at the beginning, did not try to make it be taken seriously; but we believe it is a real duty to denounce mystifications, when the opportunity arises, and from whatever side they come; especially in an era like ours, anything that risks increasing mental imbalance cannot be regarded as harmless.

December 1929

- **Jean Marquès-Rivière – *In the Shadow of Tibetan Monasteries***

Preface by Maurice Magre. (Victor Attinger Publishers, Paris and Neuchâtel, 1929).

This book, along with D.G. Mukerji's *Brahman and Pariah ,* is the best published so far in the *Orient* series . Presented in the "fictionalized" style dictated by the series, it contains a wealth of interesting information on subjects little known in the West. The author suggests that a friend, who had left for Tibet with no intention of returning, sent him an account of his initiation into the mysteries of Lamaism, and this account forms the entire basis of the book. We cannot attempt to summarize it here; it is better to encourage our readers to read it for themselves.

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directly acquainted with them, and we are certain they will not regret it, for they will find there, presented in an engaging manner, a wealth of information on Tibetan spiritual centers which, while not all entirely new, would at least be quite difficult to find elsewhere. We will offer only two criticisms. The first is that the gradation between the different phases of the initiation thus described is perhaps not sufficiently clear, which may leave some uncertainty among those unfamiliar with it regarding the ultimate goal to be achieved through all these successive trials. The second criticism, which is more serious in our view, is that the more or less extraordinary "phenomena" seem to take on somewhat excessive importance here and occupy more space than doctrinal considerations. We certainly do not dispute the existence of these things, but we question whether it is truly appropriate to dwell on them with such indulgence, since Westerners are already all too prone to exaggerate their value. The problem is not the same in the East, where these manifestations are well understood and placed in their proper, rather lesser, position; the author himself acknowledges that the Lamas who possess certain "powers" do not use them except in exceptional circumstances; we would have preferred to see him emulate this restraint. Let us hope that Mr. Marquès-Rivière will soon provide us with other, more doctrinal studies on Tibet, devoid of any "fantastic" character; we know he is quite capable of doing so.

- **SU Zanne – *Principles and elements of the sacred language according to Al-Shami's Astro-Kabbalah***

(Cosmosophiques Editions, Central Bookstore, Lausanne. 1929).

This posthumous work by the founder of "Cosmosophy" (whose real name was A.H. van de Kerckhove), rather luxuriously published by his disciples, is unfortunately written, like everything he wrote, in a style that is almost unintelligible. Therefore, to give an idea of its content, we will simply extract these few lines from the publishers' note: "The Sacred Language is the language of Initials, of Origins, of Beginnings. It is thus the Language of Initiation, the Genetic Language. This algebraic-ideographic language, made to be read, deciphered, and not spoken, is constituted by the twenty-two signs (glyphs) commonly known as the letters of the Hebrew alphabet." It is the living, vibrant meaning of these glyphs, the initial letters of all writing, the basic elements of every current language, that is revealed, to the depths that can be reached today." This “revelation” is achieved by deconstructing words in the most improbable way imaginable; moreover, SU Zanne attributes to Flemish, his mother tongue, an “original authority,” while simultaneously claiming Atlantis as his own, which he also identifies as the seat of the Black race —a rather unexpected choice. It is astonishing how many people have been more or less captivated by linguistic concerns; a volume like this is a curious document in this regard, but we refuse to see it as anything else and to take such an “initiation” seriously.

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February 1930

- ***Ceremonies and customs observed today among the Jews***

Translated from the Italian of Leo of Modena, Rabbi of Venice, by the gentleman of Simonville. (Editions Rieder, Paris, 1929).

This volume in the *Judaism* collection is a reproduction of the translation made in 1674, under a pseudonym, by Richard Simon. One should not look for any esoteric information in this work; but it is a pleasant and picturesque description of the external rites of Judaism, and, as such, it has lost none of its interest.

- **Louise Compain – *The Torn Dress***

(Eugène Figuière, Paris, 1929).

The intentions of this small volume are certainly excellent, but we do not believe that this kind of review of the various Christian churches can very effectively serve their unity. The author has endeavored to distribute praise and blame fairly among the different ecclesiastical organizations, but his modernist tendencies and his sympathies for the "Free Catholic Church" are quite evident; and it may seem somewhat contradictory to encourage a new schism when one desires a return to unity.

- **Joseph Hervé – *From Physics to Religion, through reading books of yesterday and today***

(Universal Military Printing House L. Fournier, Paris, 1929).

A veritable chaos of quotations, commentaries, notes, and reflections of all kinds on the most disparate subjects; what could the author possibly have intended in presenting us with the results of his readings in this way? It seems his aim is to arrive at a kind of philosophical-religious conception based on the current state of science; a rather futile undertaking, since science is constantly evolving and the theories in vogue today will be replaced tomorrow by others, which will be no more sound. Moreover, the author accepts a good number of hypotheses, such as that of transformism, which are already quite outdated, but which still linger in all popular science books.

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June 1930

- ***Sonetti alchemici-ermetici di Frate Elia e Cecco d'Ascoli, con introduction and note by Mario Mazzoni***

(Casa Editrice Toscana, San Gimignano, Siena).

This small volume, the first in a series of pamphlets on Hermeticism, contains, preceded by historical notes on their authors, little-known alchemical poems, some even unpublished, by Cecco d'Ascoli, a member of the "Faithful of Love" order, and by Brother Elijah, companion and successor of Saint Francis of Assisi. An appendix provides illustrations of some Hermetic symbols, accompanied by rather brief explanations; this collection of symbols will be continued in subsequent volumes.

October 1930

- **Léon de Poncins – *The Secret Forces of the Revolution***

New revised and updated edition (Bossard Editions).

This is an anti-Masonic work of the kind we might call "reasonable," in that, remaining almost exclusively on political grounds, it spares us the diabolical pronouncements of Léo Taxil. The author is even prudent enough not to mention certain suspect documents; but his thesis of the unity of Freemasonry is quite weak, and he greatly exaggerates Jewish influence.
Furthermore, he has a completely fanciful idea of the higher degrees, which he sometimes even confuses with certain non-Masonic organizations.

- ***Letter of Giovanni Pontano on “Fuoco Filosofico”, introduction, translation and note of Mario Mazzoni***

(Casa Editrice Toscana, San Gimignano, Siena).

In this booklet, the second in a series devoted to Hermeticism, the first of which we mentioned previously, the text itself occupies little space: this letter is indeed very short, but important for the subject it addresses. It is placed between an introduction which, while containing many interesting indications, perhaps does not sufficiently clarify the question of the "Philosophical Fire," and various appendices in which we find first the translation of an extract from Mrs. David-Neel's book, *Mystics and Magicians of Tibet,* then a note on the making of "Philosophical Gold" according to the "Illuminati of Avignon," and finally the continuation of the study of Hermetic symbols.

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begun in the first booklet. It is regrettable that proper names are too often distorted, and that one has to point out some surprising historical errors in the notes, making Nicolas Flamel a doctor, Guillaume Postel a friend (therefore a contemporary) of Eliphas Lévi, and placing the alchemist Geber in the 8th century *BC !*

June 1932

• SU Zanne – *The Origins: Atlantis*

(Cosmosophiques Publishing).

This posthumous work is notable above all for the exuberant linguistic fantasy that was typical of its author, and which we already noted in connection with * *The Sacred Language** . Atlantis is primarily a pretext for the exposition of more or less bizarre and rather unclear cosmogonic theories; as for the system of "educational initiation" supposedly instituted "in Atlantis Matriarchat," we believe it should be seen as little more than one of those social "utopias" that certain dreamers sometimes like to situate in some inaccessible point in space or time. Moreover, the author's chronology also seems somewhat fanciful; and is it to distinguish himself that, contrary to all traditional assumptions, he places the black race (which, it seems, is different from the Negro race) in Atlantis, and the red race in Lemuria (which he also places in the Pacific Ocean)? Several maps appear at the end of the volume; it would be curious to know by what means they were drawn up, but no indication is given on this, which, it must be admitted, does not inspire excessive confidence in their accuracy.

• Henri-Jean Bolle – *The Temple, an initiatory order of the Middle Ages*

(International Masonic Association, Geneva).

This booklet begins with a brief overview of the history of the Order of the Temple, after which the author seeks to determine the nature of its doctrine, in order to see "to what extent it is related, either historically or spiritually, to Freemasonry, which, according to several of its systems, considers it one of its ancestors." The conclusion is that, even if it is only legendary, "this tradition at least has the merit of not being anachronistic," that "it is moreover quite beautiful and full of profound meaning," and that its lack of historical basis, even if proven, "could not constitute an argument."

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* [December 1929.]

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against the higher grades." There are many shortcomings in certain respects (and we are not only talking about inevitable gaps in such a subject), because the author may not fully realize what true initiation is, which involves much more than ideas of "tolerance" or "freedom of conscience"; but, as it stands, this work nonetheless testifies to concerns which, given its origin, it is interesting to point out.

• Léon de Poncins – *Rejected by the Press*

(Alexis Redier Publishing).

This volume follows another entitled **The Secret Forces of the Revolution*,* which we reviewed here at the time* ; its title is explained by the fact that the chapters it comprises, initially submitted as separate articles to various newspapers and journals, were rejected by none of them. It would be unkind of us to criticize a work in which we are quoted at length, particularly concerning the "crisis of the modern world" and related issues, and which even bears as its epigraph a phrase from our **Theosophy*.* We will only say that the author's particular preoccupations, too exclusively political for our liking, sometimes lead him to present certain texts with an intention that is not exactly that in which we wrote them: thus, in the passage he quotes on page 55, it is not at all Freemasonry that we had in mind… But it remains true that these sympathetic quotations are a welcome change from the insults and hateful pronouncements of certain other "anti-Masons"!

July 1932

• Olivier Leroy – *The Salamander Men*

(Desclée de Brouwer et Cie).

The title of this little book, which may seem rather strange, is explained by the subtitle: "research and reflections on the incombustibility of the human body".
The author presents facts of this kind, belonging to very diverse categories, from saints to mediums, limiting himself, moreover, to those corroborated by serious testimonies. As for possible explanations, he is very cautious, and, while acknowledging the role of the supernatural in certain cases, he seems to see above all in human invulnerability, in general, a mark of our special nature, something that "makes us, more than intelligence, a unique place" in the world. "Only humankind," he concludes, "aspires to these paradoxes: no longer

* [October 1930.]

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"It weighs, it is insensitive to fire, and at times we see matter forced to bend, grumbling, to its whims."

• G. Dandoy, SJ – *The Ontology of Vêdânta*

(Translated from English by Louis-Marcel Gauthier, Desclée de Brouwer et Cie).

We had heard of Father Dandoy, who directs the journal * *Light of the East** *in Calcutta,* as having studied Hindu doctrines with sympathy and free from the usual prejudices of Orientalists; therefore, we expected to find in his book a truly comprehensive exposition of an aspect of *Vedanta,* but we must say that we were somewhat disappointed. It is not that there are not, alongside certain errors and confusions, some interesting views, although sometimes expressed with questionable terminology; but, on the whole, the author's point of view is distorted by an intention to be controversial. The very fact of limiting himself to ontology (and even then, he should not have forced into it things that in reality go beyond this domain) can only be explained by the desire to establish a comparison with scholasticism, which in fact does not go any further; and, in this regard, we must make a remark: if we have written, as the translator the

While he recalls in his preface that scholastic language is "the least inadequate of all those that the West places at our disposal" for translating certain Eastern ideas, we by no means meant to imply that it is perfectly adequate, and, in any case, it no longer applies beyond a certain point where the correspondences that can legitimately be established cease. Father Dandoy discusses as if it were simply a matter of philosophy and theology, and although he quite explicitly admits his difficulty in "refuting" *Vedanta,* it is understood that he must conclude in favor of scholasticism. However, since he cannot ignore the existence of "realization," he himself writes that, "since it is a direct and independent intuition, it is not affected by limitations of a philosophical nature and does not have to resolve difficulties of a philosophical order"; This single sentence should be enough to cut short any discussion and demonstrate its futility. Curious thing, Mr.

Maritain, in comments placed at the end of the volume, acknowledges that "the deepest meaning of *Vedanta* is not philosophical, rational, or speculative"; nothing could be truer, but doesn't this undermine the author's entire thesis? Maritain, for his part, attributes to *Vedanta* an essentially "pragmatist" value, which is at least an unfortunate word when referring to the purely spiritual order, which has nothing to do with action, and a "religious and mystical" significance, a confusion that is hardly less serious than that of making it a philosophy: it is always the same inability to escape Western perspectives… But there is something else: Maritain declares that "it would be a deception *(sic)* to take, as some of the most zealous Western interpreters of Hinduism suggest, Vedantic thought for the pure type of metaphysics par excellence." We do not believe that any "Western interpreter" has ever said that; on the contrary, we ourselves have said something of that kind, but giving the word "metaphysics" a completely different meaning than Mr. Maritain, who sees in it only "pure speculation" and, in essence, simple philosophy.

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We have explained many times that true metaphysics is essentially "supra-rational", and that, in the original sense which is the only one we took into account here, "metaphysics" is in short synonymous with "supernatural"; but "supernatural" does not necessarily mean "mystical", much to Mr.
Maritain. If we insist on this point, it is because we see all too clearly the advantage that some might think of gaining from the publication of a book like this: Father Dandoy himself seems to dream of substituting scholasticism for Vedanta in India , for he writes that "one only eliminates what one replaces," which is a rather blunt admission; but perhaps others have a more subtle intention: why couldn't one manage to "accommodate" *Vedanta* in such a way that Thomism could absorb it as it absorbed Aristotelianism? The case is entirely different, for Aristotelianism is, after all, only a philosophy, and *Vedanta* is something else entirely; moreover, Eastern doctrines, in general, are such that they defy any attempt at annexation or assimilation; But this does not mean that some cannot try their hand at it, and the sudden interest they show in these doctrines is not such as to inspire unlimited confidence in us. Moreover, the following only too readily justifies these suspicions: the *RISS,* in its issue of April 1st , published a eulogy of Father Dandoy's book, expressly claiming to contrast it with our own works; it added that this book "can be consulted with confidence" because it is "the work of a Catholic," which is a singular guarantee of competence with regard to Hindu doctrines (should we, for an exposition of Catholic doctrine, give preference to a Brahmin?), "while being written with an impartiality to which the Hindu *pandits* themselves have paid homage." Indeed, care was taken to include in the preface the testimony of a *pandit ;* Unfortunately, this approval (whose real scope is, moreover, quite limited for those familiar with the customs of oriental politeness) refers not to Father Dandoy's book, but to a work by his colleague Father.

Johanns published in the magazine *Light of the East !* Don't we have some good reasons in all this to remain somewhat reserved and suspicious?
And it should not be surprising that we dwell more on these things than on what Father Dandoy wrote, who personally is probably not responsible for it: the book does not have a very great importance in itself, it has above all the importance that its "presenters" want to give it.

• Marcel Lallemand – *Notes on Occultism*

(Editions de la Nouvelle Équipe, Brussels).

In this pamphlet, a reproduction of a study first published in the Belgian journal *Nouvelle Équipe* (January-March 1932), the author examines a variety of questions, some of which are grouped under the term "occultism," a term he himself rejects, as he is careful to point out from the outset. The first part deals with metapsychic phenomena and provides a summary of their classification, as well as the various explanations that have been proposed, for readers unfamiliar with these matters; but what follows is, for us, much more interesting. It concerns, in fact,

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Esotericism; however, as a Catholic writing in a Catholic journal, Mr. Lallemand does not hesitate to make it very clear how far he is from sharing the hateful prejudices of some in this regard. He specifies that esotericism "should in no way be confused with occultism, which is most often merely a modern distortion of it," a veritable "caricature"; he affirms "the unity of traditional doctrines," insisting especially on symbolism, which "is completely ignored by modern philosophy, but was known throughout antiquity, both Western and Eastern, by the Church Fathers and the great medieval theologians." He loudly proclaims the existence of esotericism in Christianity as well as everywhere else; and, speaking of the attitude of those who deny it, he says: "This is a tendency as anti-traditional as modernism, and, from this point of view, theology has not been immune to the influences which, since the Renaissance, have led Western intellectual life into darkness." One could not say it better; indeed, there are entire pages here that deserve to be quoted, and which we particularly recommend to the attention of certain of our adversaries… just as we draw the attention of those who persist, with the most blatant bad faith and despite all evidence, in calling the *Veil of Isis* an “occultist journal,” to what is said in it. Mr. Lallemand, and also the journal that published his study, have shown a courage that is all too rare these days, and for which they deserve the highest praise.

August-September 1932

- **Henri Borel – *Wu Wei***

Translated from Dutch by Ms. Félicia Barbier (Éditions du Monde Nouveau).

The first French translation of this little book has long been out of print; we are pleased to announce the appearance of a new translation, for, beneath its simple and unpretentious "scholarly" appearance, it is certainly one of the best things ever written in the West on Taoism. The subtitle, "A Fantasy Inspired by the Philosophy of Lao Tzu," may perhaps do it some harm; the author explains this by citing certain observations made to him, but which it seems to us he was not obliged to take into account, especially given the low esteem in which he, quite rightly, holds the opinions of more or less "official" sinologists. "I have only sought," he says, "to preserve, pure, the essence of Lao Tzu's wisdom… Lao Tzu's work is not a philosophical treatise… What Lao Tzu offers us are neither forms nor materializations; they are essences." My study is imbued with it; it is not a translation of it. The work is divided into three chapters, which, in the form of conversations with an old sage, first present the very idea of the "Tao," then specific applications to "Art" and "Love." Lao Tzu himself never spoke of these last two subjects, but the adaptation, though perhaps somewhat unusual, is nonetheless legitimate, since all things flow from it.

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essentially of the Universal Principle. In the first chapter, some developments are inspired by, or even partially translated from, Zhuangzi, whose commentary is certainly the one that best illuminates the concise and synthetic formulas of Laozi. The author rightly believes that it is impossible to translate the term "Tao" exactly; but perhaps there are not as many drawbacks as he seems to think in rendering it as "Way," which is the literal meaning, provided that it is clearly pointed out that this is only a purely symbolic designation, and that, moreover, it could not be otherwise, whatever word one chooses, since it concerns that which in reality cannot be named. Where we fully agree with Mr. Borel is when he protests against the interpretation that sinologists give to the term "Wu Wei", which they regard as an equivalent of "inaction" or "inertia", whereas "it is exactly the opposite that should be seen"; one can also refer to what we say elsewhere on this subject.

We will quote only this passage, which seems to us to characterize the spirit of the book well: “When you know how to be Wu Wei, Non-Action, in the ordinary and human sense of the term, you will truly be, and you will complete your life cycle with the same effortless ease as the flowing waves at our feet. Nothing will disturb your tranquility. Your sleep will be dreamless, and what enters the field of your consciousness will cause you no concern. You will see everything in Tao, you will be one with all that exists, and all of nature will be close to you like a friend, like your own self. Accepting without emotion the passages of night to day, of life to death, carried by the eternal rhythm, you will enter the Tao where nothing ever changes, where you will return as pure as you came out.” But we cannot urge you too strongly to read the entire book; and it is, moreover, a very pleasant read, without this detracting in any way from its intellectual value.

October 1932

• Cesare della Riviera – *Il Mondo Magico degli Heroi*

Modernized reproduction of the 1605 text, with introduction and notes by J. Evola (G. Laterza e Figli, Bari).

This hermetic treatise, while far from being as explicit and devoid of enigmas as the author claims, is undoubtedly one of those that most clearly demonstrates that the "Great Work," which it symbolically represents as the conquest of the "Tree of Life," should not be understood in the material sense that pseudo-alchemists have attempted to give it; true hermeticism is constantly contrasted with its distortions and counterfeits. Some of the explanatory methods employed are truly curious, notably the one that consists, in interpreting a word, of breaking it down into letters or syllables that will be the beginnings of so many other words, the whole of which will form a definition; this method may seem here a mere artifice, but it imitates the one used for certain sacred languages. The introduction and notes are equally worthy

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While interesting, some points occasionally warrant reservations: Mr. Evola was clearly seduced by the assimilation of Hermeticism to "magic," understood here in a sense very different from its usual meaning, and by the assimilation of the Adept to the "Hero," in which he believed he found something similar to his own conceptions, leading him to somewhat biased interpretations. Furthermore, it is regrettable that he did not dwell more on the "Center of the World," which seems to us absolutely essential, being, in a way, the key to everything else. Finally, instead of "modernizing" the text as some felt compelled to do, it might have been better to reproduce it as is, explaining words or turns of phrase whose archaism might make it difficult to understand.

- **J. Evola –** ***Maschera e volto dello Spirizualismo contemporaneo***

  (Fratelli Bocca, Turin).

This small volume strikes us as one of the author's best, a work of great value in revealing the true face and mask of "neo-spiritualism"—that is, what it claims to be and what it truly is. He reviews various forms of this "neo-spiritualism" and related concepts: spiritualism and "psychic research," psychoanalysis, theosophy, Steinerian anthroposophy, Krishnamurti's "neo-mysticism," and so on.

He focuses primarily on demonstrating the psychological dangers inherent in all these "movements," which are in reality as un-"spiritual" as possible, rather than highlighting the falsity of the theories presented within them. Moreover, on essential points, he almost entirely agrees with what we have written on this subject, as he himself points out. We only fear that his distinction between certain "magical" schools is not entirely justified; and it also seems to us that he displays a degree of leniency towards Steiner, which is admittedly relative, but which we can scarcely share. Furthermore, one of the final chapters contains considerations on the esoteric significance of Catholicism that we are all the more pleased to point out since, until now, the author's attitude seemed rather to indicate some misunderstanding of a traditional form whose value is entirely independent of what its current representatives may think or say. And, if it pleases them to deny their own doctrine any meaning higher than the crudest "letter", that is no reason to echo them.

- **M^{me} Th. Darel –** ***The Mystical Experience and the Reign of the Spirit***

  (World Review Editions, Paris).

This work, despite the undeniable interest of some of the considerations it contains, leaves a somewhat mixed impression overall; this may be due in part to the rather unfortunate use of the word "introspection," a term from secular psychology that can only lead to ambiguity here; but, above all, one constantly wonders in what sense the author actually understands the word "mystical," and even if, ultimately, it is truly mystical.

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that it is. In fact, it seems to be more a question of "asceticism," since it presents an attempt at methodical effort that is hardly compatible with mysticism proper; but, on the other hand, the specific character of this asceticism itself is rather unclear; in any case, it cannot be considered initiatory, since it does not imply adherence to any tradition, whereas this adherence is an essential condition of all initiation, as we explain in the article that the reader will have read elsewhere* . This ambiguity, which is not without causing a certain unease, is compounded by a lack of rigor in the terminology, where the author's independence from traditional doctrines is all too apparent, and which is perhaps what he most undeniably shares with mystics of every kind. Aside from these shortcomings, which we could not ignore, what is by far the most remarkable aspect of this book are the considerations relating to the respective roles of the "heart" and the "brain," or what they represent, as well as to the "vertical" and "horizontal" dimensions in the inner development of the individual—considerations that align with traditional symbolism, as we presented it in * *The Symbolism of the Cross* *. Moreover, we noted this interesting convergence a few years ago in one of our articles in * *Regnabit*** *,* the chapter in question having appeared separately in the journal * *Toward Unity*.* The author has included, as appendices to his work, reproductions of two older pamphlets; one of them contains an attempt to "rationalize" the miracle, interpreted "biologically," which is certainly not something to which we would most readily give our assent.

• Carlo Suarès – *Krishnamurti*

(Adyar Editions, Paris).

This is an account of the various phases Krishnamurti went through from the beginning of his "mission"; an enthusiastic, yet nonetheless faithful, account, since it is based largely on the texts themselves, so that one can refer to it as a collection of "documents," without in any way sharing the author's opinions. Krishnamurti made at least one very commendable gesture in his life when, to assert his independence, he pronounced the dissolution of the "Order of the Star"; and, to escape thus from the grip of his "educators," he certainly needed considerable strength of character; but, this entirely "personal" consideration aside, what exactly does he represent, and what does he claim to contribute? It would be very difficult to say, given a "teaching that is not really a teaching, that is something entirely negative," even vaguer and more elusive than the intangible philosophy of Mr. Bergson, with which it also shares some similarities in its exaltation of "life." We will no doubt be told that Krishnamurti is incapable of expressing in words the state he has attained, and

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* *[Conditions of Initiation, Voile d'Isis,* October 1932, reused to create Chapter IV of *Insights on Initiation.]*

** *[Heart and Brain,* January 1927.]

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We are willing to admit it; but let us not go so far as to assert that this state is truly "Liberation," in the Hindu sense of the word, which is excessive, and moreover irreconcilable with such an attachment to "life." If it were so, this would be felt through the most imperfect and inadequate formulations, and it would leave nothing but a rather painful impression of inconsistency, emptiness, and, let us say it, nothingness.

April 1933

- **Georges Méautis –** ***The Hellenic Soul as depicted on Greek vases***

(L'Artisan du Livre, Paris).

This work, very well illustrated with numerous reproductions, starts from an excellent intention, that of "dispelling certain ambiguities concerning Greek mythology" and showing "the gravity and seriousness of certain myths";
To what extent has the author succeeded? The almost exclusively “psychological” perspective he adopts is hardly conducive to revealing any truly profound meaning; and, in fact, what he calls the “emotional value” of Greek vases, to which he devotes the entire first part of his work, hardly helps in understanding anything: we find there no explanation of the slightest symbol. Moreover, it seems highly doubtful to us that “religion,” which did not have the same meaning for the ancients as for moderns, was something so sentimental for them; psychologists unfortunately have a habit of attributing, rather gratuitously, to people of all times and places their own ways of thinking and feeling… The second part, which examines the laws of composition of vase paintings, is more interesting in our opinion, although the considerations it contains do not extend beyond the “aesthetic” domain; To go further, it would have been necessary to link these laws to the traditional science of forms and numbers, from which they are clearly derived. Finally, in a third part, the author, in connection with a Greek vase from Palermo, considers the question of "Orphism in the Eleusinian Mysteries"; he very rightly criticizes the misunderstanding of certain modern "scholars" regarding the Mysteries, but he himself, while acknowledging that "they were not sermons or preachings," seems primarily concerned with finding in them a theoretical, even "moral," teaching, rather than the initiation they truly were, which, through its rites, was meant to place the individual in a state enabling them to become directly aware of certain realities. Where we are entirely in agreement with him is when he protests against the habit of reducing the entirety of Greek civilization to the "classical" period alone; We even think that earlier periods, if they could be better known, would be much more worthy of interest in many respects, and that there is a difference there quite comparable to that which separates the Middle Ages from modern times.

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- **A. Savoret – *From the Menhir to the Cross, essays on the triple tradition of the West***

(Psyché Publishing, Paris).

This is not a book in the proper sense, but rather a collection of somewhat heterogeneous studies, which seem to have been assembled rather hastily, since the author did not even bother to give them the form of a coherent whole, so that, in the volume itself, one chapter is described as an "article", another as a "brochure"! In fact, most of these studies had been published previously in the journal *Psyché,* and we have already had the opportunity to talk about some of them, and it is therefore no surprise that we found there all the "Western" prejudices that we had observed then; The author is careful to avoid attacking the East, but since he deliberately opposes it to the West, and since he places the latter above all else, the conclusion is self-evident… A good part of the volume is filled with linguistic considerations of the most astonishing fantasy, the presence of which seems to us to be justified as follows: Druidism being united with Judaism and Christianity to form what the author likes to call the “triple tradition of the West” (why is the Greco-Latin tradition excluded from it?), the aim is to find, as best as possible, connections between Hebrew and the Celtic languages; and indeed, by collecting words at random from the lexicons of the most varied languages, one can find almost anything one wants, especially if one relies on more than arbitrary transcriptions (the letter *ain,* for example, has absolutely no relation to a w). Let us not dwell on this further, but let us simply note how curious it is that all these "Westerners" feel the need to indulge in the worst philological extravagances; what could possibly be the explanation for this bizarre phenomenon?

July 1933

- **Henri Valentino – *The Journey of a Chinese Pilgrim in India Buddhas***

(GP Maisonneuve Publishers, Paris).

This is the account of the famous journey undertaken by Xuanzang in the 7th century AD, a narrative adapted from the translations of Stanislas Julien, which is no guarantee of perfect accuracy, and around which, moreover, it seems that a certain amount of "literary flair" has been added; nevertheless, it is quite a pleasant read. Unfortunately, the work is "preceded by an exposition of the doctrines of ancient India on life and death," that is to say, in reality, by a kind of summary of everything that Orientalists have seen fit to recount on the subject; one must see these interpretations presented in this "in abridged form," so to speak, to appreciate their incredible fancifulness; even for those accustomed to such things, one cannot help but be taken aback.

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A certain astonishment arises at the accumulation of all the "-ism" labels invented by Westerners for their own use, and applied indiscriminately to things for which they are entirely unsuitable, or at the countless confusions produced by the use of the single word "soul" to designate indiscriminately the most disparate elements of the human being. Moreover, setting aside all details, it suffices, to appreciate the spirit in which this exposition is presented, to say that the very notion of tradition is entirely absent, that heterodoxy is placed on the same footing as orthodoxy, everything being treated as a set of purely human "speculations," which "formed" at such and such an era, which have "evolved," and so on; between such a way of seeing things and that which conforms to the truth, no compromise is possible, and perhaps this book has no greater utility than to make this so clearly apparent.

• **Charles Blech – *Contribution to the history of the* Society**
Theosophy *in France*
(Adyar Editions, Paris).

This is a collection of documents, some previously unpublished, others virtually impossible to find, concerning the beginnings of the Theosophical Society in France; they are, moreover, presented in a somewhat disorganized fashion and with unfortunate printing errors (many proper names, in particular, are completely distorted). These documents are quite revealing: they deal with nothing other than Madame Blavatsky's conflicts with the first French members of the ST (recruited largely from among the spiritualists) and the quarrels among these members: this allows us to appreciate once again the singular kind of "brotherhood" that has always reigned in this milieu… But what mischievous "elemental" could have possibly driven the "General Secretary of the ST in France" to make such a sort of "official" display of all these old stories? If we were not afraid of offending his convictions, we would gladly recommend his "contribution" as a complement to our own book on "Theosophy".

October 1933

• **André Lebey – *The Necessity of History***
(Firmin-Didot et Cie, Paris).

This short book, unfortunately written in a difficult style and without any clear division from beginning to end, contains some very sound views, alongside others that are more debatable. Against those who claim that knowledge of history is useless or even harmful, the author asserts that we must learn lessons from the past for the future, and that, moreover, it is history itself, through the continuity of

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generations have made us what we are, that the past lives within us despite ourselves and that we cannot escape it; and he believes that it is ignorance of history that leads to the acceptance of many old errors reappearing in new and often aggravated forms. Certainly, we will not deny the value of a plea in favor of "tradition," even though this word has a rather different meaning here than the one we understand it to mean; but we fear that there might be some contradiction in wanting to accommodate at the same time certain distinctly anti-traditional conceptions; and, to propose to reconcile "tradition and progress," one must first believe in "progress"... On the other hand, one can ask to what extent history as it is taught coincides with true history, the kind that should be known; And, without even mentioning the excessive conscious or unconscious falsifications that distort the facts themselves, we have good reason to believe that what is now called the "historical method," with its exclusive adherence to the written "document," was invented precisely to prevent us from tracing back to the true causes, which cannot be reached in this way. Furthermore, we have little faith in the various hypothetical constructs of "philosophy of history" reviewed here; what would truly be beneficial to know is something far less "profane"; but this is precisely what had to be concealed in order to bring the modern world to its current state, and, on this point, the apparent "leaders," "blind guides of the blind," know little more than the masses they lead, transmitting suggestions of which they themselves are the first to be duped. By taking up the subject from this point of view, we would risk, as we see, being led very far, and perhaps the undertaking would not be without some danger; and yet is it not only through this that what Mr. André Lebey calls the "modern drama" could be unraveled?

• Roger Duguet – *The White Tie*

(Nouvelles Éditions Latines, Paris).

In this novel, presented as "a kind of response to the fantastic memory of *The Dragon's Chosen One ,"* the former editor of the *RISS* sought to reveal certain real or imagined undercurrents of contemporary politics; but this, in our opinion, is not the most interesting aspect of his book. One will undoubtedly be tempted to see it as a "roman à clef," in which case one would not be entirely wrong; however, it would probably be futile to try to identify each of the characters, for in the principal one, General de Bierne, we recognized many traits clearly borrowed from the figure of Bishop Jouin, alongside others that, no less obviously, are entirely unsuitable for him; we must therefore admit that we are dealing with "composite" characters. In any case, one finds here an edifying account of intrigues that must have very much taken place around the *RISS ;* and, at times, one has the impression that the author wanted to take revenge for having been excluded from certain circles. The documents of Aleister Crowley, the interventions of English and American secret agents, espionage concealed "under the guise of esotericism"—all of this reminds us of many things… We also see the emergence there-

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inside is a "seer" (in fact, there are almost always some in such adventures); and, as if by chance, the most odious roles are given to priests! As for what makes up the plot of the story, we confess that we hardly believe in the existence of a secret society called the "Optimists," whose Grand Master would be Mr. Pierre Laval, and which would give the password to everyone, including the highest dignitaries of the Church; fantasy aside, this is not much more plausible than the "Grand Lodge of the Illuminati," and there are surely more subtle ways to spread certain suggestions throughout the world; and then why must this name "Optimists," by its sound at least (and even if this connection is only attributable to the "malice of things"), evoke in a rather unfortunate way the "Optimates" of the late Léo Taxil?

• Pierre de Dienval – *The Key to Dreams*

(Central Printing Office of the Stock Exchange, Paris).

“The world we live in is far more rigged than a stage set”: nothing could be truer, but is it true in exactly the way the author of this book claims? His thesis is that there exists a certain “monetary secret,” which, according to him, is the true “philosopher’s stone,” and which is held by two groups of “initiates,” one English and the other Jewish, vying for the occult domination of the world, while occasionally colluding against third parties; and this secret is that of Freemasonry, which is merely an instrument created by the English group to ensure its influence in all countries. There are ideas here that, at first glance, are strangely reminiscent of those once expounded in the publications of the Hiéron of Paray-le-Monial and the works of Francis André (Mrs. Bessonnet-Favre); And this convergence continues on more specific points, through many historical or supposedly historical considerations: the role attributed to the Templars on the one hand, to Joan of Arc on the other, the alleged "Celticism" represented by the "French" race (?), and so on. There is, however, an essential difference: this book, far from being Catholic in spirit, is quite distinctly irreligious; not only does the author, carried away by his anti-Semitism, furiously deny the divine inspiration of the Bible (which, he says, "is by no means a religious book in the sense that the French attach to this word"... as if there were a specifically "French" conception of religion!), but one senses very clearly that, at heart, all religion is for him a purely human... and political thing. Furthermore, he coldly considers the possibility that the role played hitherto by Freemasonry might be entrusted to the Catholic Church, thanks to the "domestication of the Pope" *(sic) ;* and indeed, according to him, this hypothesis has already been partially realized: does he not, in fact, denounce the canonization of Joan of Arc, which in his eyes has the fault of stripping her of "her character as a national heroine," as "a maneuver carried out with the odious complicity of the official leaders of the Catholic Church, who have gradually gone into the service of the occult masters of England"? But let us leave that aside, and, without dwelling on the numerous pseudo-historical fantasies with which the work is filled, let us get to the heart of the matter: first, the author clearly has not the slightest notion of what initiation is; and, if the "high initiates" (whom he calls himself)

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(He presents them as forming a "superior committee," presumably in the manner of the directors of a financial company) if they had no other concerns than those he attributes to them; they would simply be the most ignorant of the uninitiated. Furthermore, the supposed "secret," as he presents it, is, as he himself admits, childishly simple; if that were so, how could this "secret" have been so well kept, and how could many others, throughout history, have failed to discover it just as easily as he did? It is, in fact, merely an elementary law concerning exchange rates; the author even draws a graph of it in which, amusingly, he seeks to find the explanation for the "equilateral triangle interlaced with a compass" (?) which he believes to be "the emblem of Freemasonry," which, incidentally, was not "founded by Ashmole in 1646"; now that, at least, is a rather unusual symbolism! We are far from denying that a traditional "monetary science" exists, or has existed, and that this science has secrets; but these secrets, although they have nothing to do with the "philosopher's stone," are of a completely different nature than what we see here; moreover, by repeating ad nauseam that money is a purely "material" and "quantitative" thing, we are going precisely in the direction intended by those we think we are targeting, and who are in reality the destroyers of this traditional science as well as of all other knowledge of the same character, since it is they who have wrested from the modern mind any notion exceeding the domain of "matter" and "quantity." These people, although they are not "initiates" (for it is "counter-initiation" that they belong to), are by no means themselves fooled by this "materialism" that they have imposed on the modern world, for ends that are quite other than "economic" ones; and, whatever instruments they use depending on the circumstances, they are a little more difficult to discover than would be any "committee" or "group" of Englishmen or Jews... As for the true "monetary science", we will simply say this: if it were of a "material" order, it would be perfectly incomprehensible that, as long as it had an effective existence, the questions relating to it were not left to the discretion of temporal power (how could the latter ever have been accused of "altering coins" if it had been sovereign in this respect?), but, on the contrary, subjected to the control of a spiritual authority (we alluded to this in *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power),* a control which asserted itself by marks of which we find a last, incomprehensible vestige in the inscriptions which, not so long ago, appeared on the edge of coins; But how can this be explained to someone who pushes "nationalism" (yet another of those suggestions aimed at the systematic destruction of all traditional spirit) to the point of delivering a dithyrambic eulogy of Philip the Fair? Moreover, it is a mistake to say that "monetary" metals have no intrinsic value; and, if their value is essentially symbolic (gold and silver, the Sun and the Moon), it is all the more real for it, since it is only through symbolism that the things of this world are linked to higher realities. To these fundamental objections, we must add some rather strange observations: the chapter devoted to *the Intelligence Service* is very disappointing, not to say disturbing, because, while it contains ingenious but hypothetical constructions, particularly concerning the Dreyfus Affair, it does not cite a single precise and certain fact, even though there is no shortage of them, even of

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public knowledge, and that, in truth, we would have been spoiled for choice…
Furthermore, the author refers to a study he previously devoted to related questions; how is it that this staunch anti-Mason published this study in a publication whose Masonic ties are perfectly well known to us? We do not intend to doubt anyone's good faith, for we know all too well how many people are "led" without the slightest suspicion; but we consider this book to be one of those more likely to mislead public opinion than to enlighten it; and, observing these matters in a completely disinterested manner, we cannot help but note that works of this kind are currently multiplying at an abnormal and rather alarming rate… In any case, the best proof that the author has not truly uncovered the "great secret" he imagines he is revealing is, quite simply, that his book was able to be published without any hindrance!

February 1934

- **Marcelle Weissen-Szumlanska (Mrs. M. Georges Vicrey) – *The Archaic Soul of North Africa***

(Nouvelles Éditions Latines, Paris).

The study of prehistoric monuments in Algeria is primarily a pretext for a kind of more or less literary fantasy about the supposed migrations of Celtic peoples, largely inspired by Fabre d'Olivet. There is much discussion of a certain "solar initiation," also described as "spiritualist," in which "red ochre painting" seems to play a considerable role. This initiation supposedly originated in Atlantis, which was said to be the homeland of these peoples, who are nevertheless simultaneously called "Nordic" or "Borean"; we have already had occasion to point out other examples of this astonishing confusion. The attribution of the megalithic monuments to the "Gaels" is more than hypothetical; and the story of their return from India to the West, in search of their lost homeland, lacks even a shred of plausibility. It hardly needs to be added, after this, that the tendencies of this book are rather aggressively "Western." And that is probably the main reason for its publication.

- **Gabriel Tradieux – *The Light of Asia***

(Éditions Eugène Figuière, Paris).

This is a translation of Edwin Arnold's poem, **The Light of Asia*,* well known to anyone with even a passing interest in Buddhism. We have not

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no competence to appreciate its form; in principle, we are always somewhat wary of a verse translation, as it seems unlikely to be accurate; but, in this case, the author himself anticipated this objection, for he declares that he "wanted to render the meaning and rhythm, rather than the literal text." As for the work itself, Mr. Trarieux acknowledges that it contains an element of fantasy, and that "none of the Buddhist schools would find its doctrine exactly reflected in it"; but, to justify this, he asserts that "imagination, in true poets, is a faculty of knowledge," which does not seem convincing to us at all; And, when he adds that it is "a clairvoyance that is unaware of itself", this is even less so, because we think that it would be appropriate to reverse the proposition: this all-too-famous "clairvoyance" is itself, in most cases, only the illusion of an imagination which, in a kind of "waking dream", takes its own constructions for external and independent realities.

• Dynan-V. Fumet – *The Divine Prayer*

(Cahiers de la Quinzaine, Paris).

This little book is a commentary on the *Lord's Prayer,* curious in some respects, but rather obscure; we have some reason to think that the author intended it to have a more or less "esoteric" intent… Unfortunately, linguistic oddities do not constitute esotericism, any more than the difficulty of understanding something makes it "hermetic," despite the common understanding of that word. In fact, we see nothing here that deviates from the religious perspective, which is exoteric by definition; perhaps it takes on a slightly particular nuance, but even this does not seem to extend beyond the realm open to theological discussion.

• Philippe Guiberteau – *Music and Incarnation*

(Cahiers de la Quinzaine, Paris).

It would be all the more difficult for us not to approve of the author's intentions, and the principles on which he intends to rely, since he has placed at the beginning of his study an epigraph taken from the *Symbolism of the Cross,* concerning the "law of correspondence" is considered the foundation of symbolism. It is only regrettable that the "material" to which he applies these principles is not perfectly adequate: modern writers, lacking traditional sources, while believing they are creating symbolism, are often in reality only indulging in individual fantasy. We believe it is fair to say that this is, among others, the case of Paul Claudel, whose *The *Satin Slipper** is studied here: his rather arbitrary geographical allegorism only vaguely resembles the "sacred geography" to which we have sometimes alluded; and, when he considers the waters as "signifying the Spirit of God," he contradicts the symbolism common to all traditions, in a way that is all the more astonishing since one only needs to reread the beginning of Genesis to realize it immediately: if "the Spirit of God was

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"Focused on the waters," it is obviously because the waters themselves represent something else… We hope that Mr. Guiberteau, who is not responsible for these "eccentricities," will give us other studies of the same inspiration, but preferably devoted to writers or poets who were really something other than "literary figures."

March 1934

• Léon de Poncins – *Storm over the World, or the Bankruptcy of Progress*

(Gabriel Beauchesne, Paris).

The book's subtitle clearly indicates its intention: it is a severe, and perfectly justified, critique of so-called modern "progress," as seen in the various spheres of human activity. The author responds to the arguments of the defenders of this "progress" with considerations drawn from the current situation; he successively demonstrates the failure of mechanization, the failure of capitalism, the failure of democracy; all of which, in reality, has led only to chaos.

This exposition of the "crisis of the modern world" is similar in more ways to some of our works, which are frequently cited in it; and, remaining on ground more immediately accessible to all, it cannot fail to provoke, in many of those who still believe in certain "idols," some very salutary reflections. It is only regrettable that, on some points, the author has accepted on faith the assertions of people who speak, and not always in good faith, about things of which they are completely ignorant: thus, Kabbalah is described as a "humanitarian religion based solely on the data of Reason and Nature"; yet there is not a single word in this sentence that can truly be applied to Kabbalah, of which what it defines would in fact be its antithesis. It is very dangerous to draw information on such subjects from the editors of the *RISS,* and we would like to urge Mr. de Poncins to be wary in the future of such a dubious "source"!

• Georges Méautis – *The Mysteries of Eleusis*

(Éditions de la Baconnière, Neuchâtel).

This small volume begins with a description of the sanctuary of Eleusis based on archaeological discoveries, followed by an attempt to reconstruct how the Mysteries were celebrated—a necessarily incomplete reconstruction, since information is entirely lacking on many points. The author considers the "spirit" of the Mysteries with evident sympathy, but in a rather superficial way: nothing truly initiatory is clearly apparent.

When he speaks, according to Aristotle, of the "impressions" one received there, he seems

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to believe that this is merely something "psychological", following the tendency we have already noted in his previous work on Greek vases;
If the initiates were truly "qualified," the states induced in them were certainly of a completely different order; and, if it happened that the Mysteries were, at a certain time, too widely opened, their purpose nevertheless always remained essentially the same. It is also remarkable that, despite this "popularization," which necessarily implies a certain degeneration, no indiscretion was ever committed; this is undeniable proof of the strength of the tradition represented by the Mysteries. As for their origin, Mr. Méautis does not think it should be sought in Egypt, as many have suggested, but rather in Minoan Crete; it would still remain to be seen, moreover, to what the ancient Cretan civilization itself was connected. Mr. Méautis sometimes accepts with regrettable ease certain supposed conclusions of modern "criticism," which are at times of an...unheard-of naiveté; In particular, there is a certain story of "personified cries" which, in this genre, surpasses anything one can imagine; how are our contemporaries made to be able to believe such things?

May 1934

- **J. Evola – *Rivolta against the modern world***

(Ulrico Hoepli, Milan).

In this new work, the author contrasts traditional and modern civilizations, the former being transcendent and essentially hierarchical, the latter founded on a purely human and contingent element; he then describes the phases of spiritual decadence that led from the traditional world to the modern world. We have reservations on a few points: for example, when discussing the single original source of the two powers, priestly and royal, the author has a very marked tendency to emphasize the royal aspect at the expense of the priestly one; when he distinguishes two types of tradition, which he attributes respectively to the North and the South, the second of these two terms seems somewhat inappropriate, even if he does not mean it in a strictly "geographical" sense, since he seems to be referring primarily to Atlantis, which, in any case, corresponds to the West and not the South. We also fear that he sees in early Buddhism something other than what it truly was, for he praises it in a way that, from a traditional point of view, is hardly understandable; conversely, he disparages Pythagoreanism in a rather unjustified manner; and we could point out other similar issues. This should not prevent us from acknowledging, as is fitting, the merit and interest of the work as a whole, and from drawing its particular attention to all those concerned by the "crisis of the modern world," and who, like us, believe that the only effective means

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The solution would consist of a return to the traditional spirit, outside of which nothing truly "constructive" could be worthwhilely undertaken.

• **Corrado Pagliani – *Di Nostradamus and one of its most recent notes***

(Carlo Accame, Turin).

This brochure, lavishly illustrated with reproductions of ancient documents, first describes an inscription commemorating a stay of Nostradamus in Turin in 1556 and the topography of the place where it is located; then, on this occasion, the author gives an overview of the life and works of Nostradamus, as well as some examples of remarkable predictions contained in his famous *Centuries,* predictions which seem to him to be more magical than astrological, in which we would be quite tempted to agree with him.

• **Fernand Divoire – *Nothingness… Paradise… or Reincarnation?***

(Dorbon-Ainé, Paris).

A confusing book, attempting to present, in dialogue form, the arguments "for" and "against" reincarnation; no clear conclusion emerges, but one senses that the author leans toward the "for" side. It hardly needs to be said that, in all this, the only truly valid and decisive argument, namely the metaphysical impossibility of reincarnation, is entirely ignored; in these

Under these conditions, one can discuss indefinitely without achieving any serious result.

November 1934

• **Eugène Lennhoff – *History of Secret Political Societies in 19th and 20th centuries***

(Payot, Paris).

This work provides an excellent "illustration" of what we discuss elsewhere concerning the different kinds of secret organizations, for it contains, gathered under the heading "political," examples of the principal categories whose distinction we outline. Indeed, the "Decembrists" in Russia, the various Irish societies, and the "Black Hand" in Serbia and Bosnia were most certainly nothing more than simple associations of political conspirators. On the other hand, as we explain in our article, one can see something else in the "Carbonari," at least with regard to their origins, although, in this purely historical account, it is hardly possible to discern this except through a few quotations.

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extracted from rituals. The "Hung Society" in China is a term, perhaps a little too conventional, under which a number of these more or less external and temporary organizations are grouped together. As we have said elsewhere, they stem from the Taoist tradition, even if they have sometimes adopted partly Buddhist, or even Christian, forms, as in the case of the "Tai Ping." Finally, the "Ku Klux Klan" is just one of the countless caricatures of initiatory organizations that have emerged in America; but, while most of them are quite harmless, this one has become known in a rather sinister light through a whole series of murders and arsons, which does not change the fact that the main goal of its founders seems to have been, as is almost always the case in such situations, simply to derive considerable income from them. We do not think that the author himself had a very clear awareness of these distinctions, and he could be criticized for placing everything on the same level; his book nevertheless constitutes an interesting contribution to what can be called the "underground history" of our time.

• **Léon de Poncins –** ***The Dictatorship of Occult Powers: The F*** ÿ

M ÿ ***according to his secret documents***

(Gabriel Beauchesne, Paris).

We will begin by offering the author a criticism that also applies to many other works of the same kind: the profane ideas that have crept into Freemasonry, and which he very rightly attacks, are not "Masonic principles" at all; they are, in fact, quite the opposite, since they mark a degeneration of Freemasonry as such. And one cannot attribute to "Freemasonry," more or less personified for the sake of argument, what is merely the result of the incomprehension of the majority of its current members. Even so, distinctions must be made, because, while there is more or less degeneration and incomprehension almost everywhere, they do not manifest themselves everywhere in the same forms. And, in this respect, the attempt to assimilate the tendencies of Anglo-Saxon Freemasonry to those of Latin Freemasonry would give rise to many reservations. That said, we agree with the author in all that his attitude has that is properly "anti-modern", and also for what he says about occultism; but we regret to see him reproduce again, with regard to Kabbalah, the erroneous notions that we have already pointed out on a previous occasion.

• **P. Chatir –** ***El-Dalil's Ten Occult Talks on Man in the Universe***

(Albert Messein, Paris).

This book, despite its title, is not specifically "occultist"; it is, in the form of a series of conversations between a "Master" and his disciples, an exposition, unfortunately rather confused, of the author's particular ideas on all sorts of questions, from the origins of life to the social order; there are some rather

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curious, but somewhat lost amidst sentimental considerations that certainly do not constitute arguments. In the preface, André Lebey presents the author in a rather amusing way; while making serious reservations about his ideas, he takes the opportunity to affirm the existence of a "spiritual Tradition" throughout the centuries; it would have been preferable, however, that this affirmation, which corresponds to something very "positive" for us, did not remain vague... a little too "poetic" for our taste.

December 1934

- **Francis Warrain –** ***The Philosophical Works of Hoene Wronski: Texts, Commentaries and Criticism; Volume I***

(Editions Véga, Paris).

This volume is the first in a series intended to comprise seven, and is designed to present, with commentary on the more obscure points, the essence of Wronski's philosophy, excluding his purely mathematical and physical theories. This approach has both advantages and disadvantages: when dealing with a rather prolific and confused author, whose work is as "dispersed" as Wronski's, it is certainly difficult for the average reader, or one with little time to spare, to form an accurate and sufficient understanding of it, and to discern what is truly important amidst a multitude of repetitions, digressions, and secondary considerations. But, on the other hand, there is always a risk that a choice of texts may be somewhat arbitrary, or at least that it may necessarily reflect, to some extent, the point of view of the person who made it, a point of view which is not necessarily identical to that of the author himself, so that the perspective may be distorted; however, in the present case, we think that we can trust Mr. Warrain, who has specifically studied Wronski for many years, and who has already shown, through a large part of his work, that he has assimilated his ideas as much as possible. – What should now be clear to anyone reading this volume without bias or preconceived ideas is that, whatever some may have claimed, Wronski was in reality nothing more and nothing other than a philosopher: the sometimes strange language he uses should not be misleading in this regard, and one would find something similar, with the same social and religious concerns, in a number of his contemporaries who, certainly, were by no means “initiates”.

Moreover, if Wronski had possessed any truly esoteric knowledge, he could not have been subject to the eminently "profane" influence of Kant and the modern "Germanic philosophy" that stems from him, which, in fact, was exerted on him to a large extent, as he himself very explicitly acknowledges, while claiming to go further; and we will say in passing,

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In this regard, Mr. Warrain's efforts to explain and justify this influence, even attempting to draw a parallel between Kantianism and Thomism, seem to us rather risky… Furthermore, Wronski admits a “law of progress,” which he wants to apply even in metaphysics, which clearly shows that what he means by this word is still only “pseudo-metaphysics”; the importance he gives to the “critical” point of view and to “theories of knowledge,” the somewhat supreme role he attributes to “reason” among the faculties, the abusive use he constantly makes of certain terms such as “absolute,” “infinite,” and “creation,” are also very significant in this respect; And finally, it would certainly be difficult to push the spirit of system any further than he did, since it is the very opposite and negation of the initiatory spirit: from all this, we can conclude that those to whom we alluded earlier spoke of it without ever having read it! Let us also note, as a curiosity, Wronski's professed aversion to mysticism, which for him is nothing but "darkness, error, and perversion," and whose source he attributes to "beings who remain foreign to the current human species, and even constitute themselves enemies of humankind," thus seeming to confuse it rather bizarrely with what might be "counter-initiation," which is truly excessive, and moreover, completely false; and this did not prevent him from sometimes being called a "mystic" himself, which is the height of irony!

- **Marcel Lallemand – *The Transfinite, its logic and its metaphysics***
  (Desclée de Brouwer et Cie, Paris).

This book begins with an exposition of Cantor's theories on the "transfinite," presented in terms as clear and simple as possible, followed by a critique of these same theories, which the author opposes while taking a distinctly different position from that of the "finitists." He rightly rejects the use of the word "infinite" in mathematics, and he no less rightly maintains that the set of integers is "indefinite" and not "transfinite"; he retains, however, the term "transfinite," but applying it only to the "transcendental" multitude, that is, outside the domain of quantity, which has the effect of eliminating the illogicalities that the "finitists" usually invoke as arguments against the Cantorian conception. While fully agreeing with the author on the substance, we believe that the terminology he adopts may not be entirely without drawbacks: the word "transfinite" already has another meaning, a quantitative one, the very one for which Cantor expressly coined it; since this meaning is rejected as illusory, is it really necessary to retain the word, and doesn't this risk giving rise to some ambiguities? Moreover, etymologically, "transfinite" means "beyond the finite"; but the domain of quantity is not the only finite one, and it is not by exceeding it that one also exceeds the "finite"; everything that is relative is necessarily, by its nature, finite or limited in one way or another; quantity represents only a particular limiting condition, and there are others that apply to the modes of universal existence that escape it. We believe there is something here that warranted closer examination and

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presented with more precision, because, on this essential point, the author's thought seems to remain somewhat vague; it would therefore be desirable for him to return to it on another occasion, and this could even be the subject of a new work for him which would certainly not be without interest and which would complement this one in the most happy way.

- **M me Emmanuel Lalande, André Lalande, L. Chamuel, Jules Legras, Dr. J. Durand, Justin Maumus –** ***Marc Haven (Dr. Emmanuel Lalande)***

(Pythagore Publishing, Paris).

This is less a biography per se than a collection of recollections about Marc Haven, written by some of the people who knew and were close to him.
closer to him during the different periods of his life. One might have wished to find perhaps fewer minor details, not all of which relate directly to Marc Haven, and more information about his purely intellectual activities; but it seems that this gap will be filled in another work that is announced as currently in preparation. In the meantime, the excellent idea has been to reproduce, following this collection, a number of his pages, some of which have remained unpublished until now, others difficult to find now in the journals where they originally appeared.

January 1935

WB **Seabrook –** ***Adventures in Arabia***

(Gallimard, Paris).

This book, like those by the same author that have already been translated previously *(The Magic Island and The Secrets of the Jungle)* stands out favorably from the usual "traveller's tales"; no doubt this is because we are dealing here with someone who does not carry certain preconceived ideas with him everywhere, and who, above all,
is by no means convinced that Westerners are superior to all other peoples. There are indeed occasional moments of naiveté, singular astonishment at very simple and elementary things; but this very fact seems to us, in short, to be a guarantee of sincerity. – In truth, the title is somewhat misleading, as the author did not travel to Arabia proper, but only to the regions immediately north of it. Let us also say, to put an end to the criticisms at once, that the Arabic words are sometimes strangely distorted, as if by someone trying to transcribe roughly the sounds they hear without any concern for spelling, and that some quoted sentences are translated in a rather fanciful way. Finally, we were able to do once again

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A curious observation: in Western books intended for the "general public," the *shahada* is almost never reproduced exactly. Is this purely accidental, or might one not be tempted to think that something prevents it from being recited by the mass of hostile or simply indifferent readers? – The first part, which is the longest, concerns life among the Bedouins and is almost entirely descriptive, which certainly does not mean that it is without interest; but in the following parts, there is something more.

One of them, which deals with the Dervishes, notably contains remarks by a Mawlawi sheikh whose meaning is, without a doubt, faithfully reproduced: thus, to dispel the incomprehension that the author shows towards certain *turuq,* this sheikh explains to him that "there is not a single narrow and direct path to God, but an infinite number of paths"; it is a pity that he did not have the opportunity to make him understand also that Sufism has nothing in common with pantheism or with heterodoxy… On the other hand, it is indeed heterodox sects, and moreover rather enigmatic ones, that are concerned in the other two parts: the Druze and the Yazidis; and, on both, there is interesting information, without however any pretense of revealing and explaining everything. As for the Druze, one point that remains particularly obscure is the cult they are said to offer to a "golden calf" or a "calf's head"; there is something there that could perhaps give rise to many comparisons, of which the author seems to have only glimpsed a few; at least he understood that symbolism is not idolatry… As for the Yazidis, one will have a rather different idea of them from that given in the conference we recently discussed in our journal reviews (November issue): here, there is no longer any question of "Mazdeism" in relation to them, and, in this respect at least, it is certainly more accurate; but the "worship of the devil" could give rise to discussions more difficult to resolve, and the true nature of the *Malak Tâwûs* remains a mystery. Perhaps the most interesting aspect, unbeknownst to the author who, despite what he has seen, refuses to believe it, concerns the "seven towers of the devil," centers for projecting satanic influences throughout the world. The fact that one of these towers is located among the Yazidis does not prove that they themselves are "Satanists," but only that, like many heterodox sects, they can be used to facilitate the actions of forces they are unaware of. It is significant in this regard that the regular Yazidi priests refrain from performing any rites in this tower, while a kind of wandering magician often comes to spend several days there. What exactly do these latter figures represent? In any case, it is not necessary for the tower to be permanently inhabited, if it is nothing other than the tangible and "localized" support of one of the centers of "counter-initiation", which are presided over by the *awliyâ es-Shaytân ;* and these, by the constitution of these seven centers, claim to oppose the influence of the seven *Aqtâb* or earthly "Poles" subordinate to the supreme "Pole", although this opposition can only be illusory, the spiritual domain being necessarily closed to "counter-initiation".

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• L. Fry – *Léo Taxil and Freemasonry*

(British-American Press, Chatou).

This large volume, published by the "Friends of Bishop Jouin," who are likely former collaborators of the *RISS,* contains letters addressed to Abbé de Bessonies by Léo Taxil and by various people who were involved, directly or indirectly, in the singular story we know. It also includes the famous speech in which Taxil confessed to his "hoax," and the explanations of the editor of Diana Vaughan's *Memoirs .* In truth, "hoax" is too easily stated, but the matter is more complex and not so easy to resolve; it seems that there was something else involved, and that Taxil simply lied once again when he claimed to have invented everything on his own initiative. Herein lies a skillful mixture of truth and falsehood, and it is true that, as stated in the foreword, "imposture exists only insofar as it is based on certain aspects of truth capable of inspiring confidence"; but what exactly is the "core of truth" contained in all this? That there are "Satanists" and "Luciferians" in the world, and even many more than is generally believed, is undeniable; but these things have nothing to do with Freemasonry; might not the very aim of attributing to Freemasonry what is actually found elsewhere have been to divert attention and mislead research?

If this is the case, who could have inspired Taxil and his known collaborators, if not more or less direct agents of this "counter-initiation" to which all these dark things belong? There is, moreover, in all this a strange atmosphere of "suggestion"; one can realize this by seeing, for example, a man of such unquestionable good faith as M. de La Rive (we knew him well enough to be certain of this) go so far as to translate without hesitation as "To Our God Lucifer Most Holy and Infinite Forever" an "unpublished formula" which simply means "In the Name of the Most Holy and Indivisible Trinity"! We cannot consider examining here all the methods of distortion employed in Taxil's works; one of the most common is that which consists of using truly existing terms, but attributing to them an imaginary meaning: thus, there was indeed a "Rite of the Palladium", but which never had anything Luciferian about it; And the "Triangles" in Freemasonry are not "back Lodges," but simply Lodges in formation, not yet having the required number of members to be "just and perfect"; we will simply cite these two words as examples, because of the particularly important role they played in the whole affair. As for what seems to be considered, rightly or wrongly, as the central point, that is, the existence of Diana Vaughan, the enigma is hardly clear and perhaps never will be: that one or more people must have presented themselves under this name in various circumstances is more than probable; but how could one hope to identify them? At the end of the volume, under the title *The Mystery of Leo Taxil and the Real Diana Vaughan,* are reproduced the articles that appeared some time ago on this subject in the *RISS* and which we have already discussed at the time; It is rather curious that the new "proof" they claim to provide is related to the history of the nuns of Loigny, but it is no more convincing; ultimately, it's all rather inconclusive, neither way... Now,

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A question arises, which is perhaps of more current interest than all the others: why does there seem to be such a strong desire, on one side, to resurrect this old affair? It is explained that "the Palladium, put to sleep in 1897, one might say, seems to be on the verge of awakening"; "a legend perhaps," it is added, "but resting on a basis made up of recognized theories and facts"; should we expect to witness an attempt to finally uncover this real basis, or only to see the legend take on, as in *The Dragon's Chosen One,* a new form no less "mythical" than the first? In any case, the foreword bizarrely mixes the most diverse things, placing on the same level the most vulgar "pseudo-initiatory" groups and organizations of a decidedly far more suspect nature, not to mention some purely fanciful assertions, such as the one that makes Ram Mohun Roy "a disciple of the Tibetan Lamas" and the *Brahma-Samaj* "a circle of oriental occultism and mysticism founded in England in 1830"! But the last item in the collection is a reproduction of an article from the *RISS* entitled *"The Missionaries of Gnosticism,"* actually devoted to the OTO; this article, which seems to have no connection with anything else, might it not, on the contrary, be in some way the "key" to it all? We will simply pose a question here; if the question were to be answered in the affirmative, it could shed a singular light on many things; and no doubt we are not yet finished with all this "devilishness"!

March 1935

• Ludowic Réhault – *The World Teacher, Krishnamurti*

("The Harmony Tables", Nice).

This book is undoubtedly the only one in which a Theosophist has dared to expose, with complete candor, without seeking to conceal or "reconcile" anything, the dispute that arose between Krishnamurti and the leaders of the Theosophical Society; it is truly damning for the latter, whose role appears astonishingly duplicitous; and it constitutes, in this respect, a document of the greatest interest. As for the author's admiration for Krishnamurti and his belief that he is indeed the "World Teacher" (without, moreover, one being able to know exactly what is meant by this expression), that is, naturally, quite another matter, on which we must express the most definite reservations. Krishnamurti shook off the yoke that was imposed upon him, and he certainly did very well; we readily acknowledge that this required a certain courage and strength of character to which we can only pay tribute. But this is not enough to prove that he has an extraordinary "mission," however different from the one his educators intended for him. That he abhors "societies" and "ceremonies" is all well and good; but to go from that to positioning himself as an opponent of all religion and even to repudiating all initiation is a chasm; it must be said, and this is his excuse, that he has only known dismal ones.

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Counterfeits: the Liberal Catholic Church, Freemasonry, the Theosophical Esoteric School; but, if he were truly what he is said to be, he would know that what actually deserves to be called religion and initiation is something quite different; in fact, he seems to have no idea of what constitutes the essence of any tradition… And what is an “instructor” who, by his own admission and that of his followers, teaches nothing and has nothing to teach? He even expressly denies having a doctrine; so why does he speak? Everything, in short, boils down to extremely vague formulas, dangerous precisely because of their vagueness; everyone can find in them more or less what they want, but those who are not satisfied with mere words cannot be satisfied. Let us point out in this regard a curious fact: we search in the Buddhist *Sutras ,* in the Gospels, in the Epistles of Saint Paul, for anything that might, if we put some effort into it, appear to agree with the statements of Krishnamurti; but, when we find something that manifestly contradicts them, we hasten to assert that these are "interpolations"; this method, worthy of modernist exegetes, is really a little too convenient! Finally, let us say it clearly, if Krishnamurti were indeed "liberated", that is to say if he were a *jîvan-mukta* in the true sense of this term (even without having to fulfill in addition the function of a *jagad-guru),* he would not be identified with "Life" (even with a capital L), but would be beyond it, as well as beyond any other limiting condition of contingent existence; And this sort of "vital" immanentism, which fits so well with the characteristic tendencies of the modern world (could Krishnamurti's success be explained without it?), is here, truly, the fruit by which the tree can be judged... And, when Krishnamurti speaks of "those who will become the Flame", who would dare to say all that this strange expression can evoke?

• L. de Païni – *Integral Mysticism*

(Published by "Les Argonautes", Paris).

This small volume could be considered an “illustration” of what we say elsewhere about the confusion between the psychic and the spiritual; this single definition would suffice to show it clearly: “Mysticism in itself is an experimental science of the unconscious, which is a complete penetration of the mystery of the obscure psychic forces of the organism.” And the author shows great esteem for current psychology because “the unconscious resumes its great primordial role there; in the human economy, our fragile consciousness rests on its bottomless, living, eternally moving darkness…” All this is naturally accompanied by a certain “evolutionism,” which is expressed above all in rather fanciful “cosmogonic” views; and there is, on the other hand, a strange exaggeration of the role of the body: undoubtedly, it truly represents a state of our being and is therefore more or less closely related to its other modalities; But this does not mean that it is "a structure of pure psyche," much less "a spiritual construct"; here again, in the absence of any notion of the hierarchy of states, we are in complete confusion. There is another confusion, concerning mysticism itself: what the author calls "integral mysticism" she does not find in Western mysticism, which is nevertheless the only one to which this name can be applied.

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to apply properly, but in what she believes to be "Asian mysticism," which is in reality something quite different; and this "integral mysticism," according to her idea of it, would ultimately exist fully only in Tibet; why in Tibet rather than in other Eastern countries, if not because it has, rightly or wrongly, the reputation of being particularly fertile in singular "phenomena"? Of the Tibetan tradition, which is initiatory and not mystical, we see here only the psychic, and even psycho-physiological, side, that is to say, the means are taken for the end; And all this would be nothing but a "living dislocation of being," culminating in an "immersion in the great psychic ocean with its unfathomable and formidable depths"... Formidable indeed, for these are possibilities of being, but inferior possibilities that initiation must, on the contrary, allow it to overcome definitively. A book like this produces a truly distressing impression; what it offers man is indeed a "step backward," but one which, far from leading him "toward pure spirit," can only lead him to a "cosmic communion" with "infra-human" powers, for it is these, and not "spiritual" forces, that reign in "the immense ocean of the profound racial psyche," profound certainly, but in the "abyssal" and "infernal" sense of the word!

May 1935

- **Arturo Reghini – *For the restoration of geometric geometry***

(Casa Editrice Ignis, Rome).

We know from various ancient accounts that the Pythagoreans demonstrated certain geometric theorems in a way entirely different from that of modern mathematicians; but their demonstrations have not survived: the theorem on the sum of the angles of a triangle was demonstrated independently of Euclid's postulate, but then it was necessary to admit some other postulate as a starting point, and what was it? The author, after examining the various hypotheses that have been proposed on this subject, concludes that a postulate of "rotation" exists, as the one most consistent with the general conceptions of the Pythagoreans, who established a close link between geometry and cosmology. He then shows that this postulate of "rotation," without the postulates of Euclid and Archimedes, is sufficient to prove not only the theorem just mentioned, but also the theorem of the square of the hypotenuse, and even to reconstruct entirely, step by step, the whole of Pythagorean geometry of the plane and of space. The considerations concerning the "pentalpha" and regular polyhedra are particularly important, and not only from a geometric point of view as understood by moderns: as the author points out, for the Pythagoreans and for Plato, geometry was a sacred science, while Euclidean geometry, by breaking all ties with other orders of knowledge and becoming its own end—

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even degenerated into a secular science; we intend to return to some of these questions at greater leisure in the near future.

• Arturo Reghini – *Il Fascio littorio*

(Extract from the magazine Docens, Stab. Ambrosini, Roma).

In this brief study, the author examines the origin of the Roman fasces, which appears to be traced back to the Etruscans, and its symbolic and traditional meanings. From this perspective, it is particularly noteworthy that the number of lictors who carried the fasces before the principal magistrates was always either twelve, or a multiple or submultiple of that number; and, moreover, the number of rods forming the bundle also seems to have been twelve. The question is thus linked to that of the significance of the number twelve in different traditions; the author, without in any way claiming to exhaust this very broad subject, reviews the principal points of agreement that can be observed in this regard among the various ancient peoples. A question raised here, which deserves closer examination, is that of the appropriate place to be assigned to the zodiacal correspondence among the other applications of the duodecimo. All of this, relating to cyclic numbers, can also be linked to the "symbol of the Universe".

Pythagorean, the dodecahedron, which is discussed in the other work we mentioned above.

• Hari Prasad Shastri – *Teachings from the Bhagawadgita: translation, introduction and comments*

(Luzac and Co., London).

Numerous translations of the *Bhagavad Gita* already exist in various Western languages; this one is incomplete, its author having omitted passages that he felt pertained to conditions more specific to India, retaining only what he considered to have the value of a "universal" teaching. We, for our part, believe this mutilation to be rather regrettable. Moreover, dominated by an idea of excessive "simplicity," he provides only a superficial meaning, which reveals nothing of the deeper significance; and his commentary, in short, amounts to very little. One could also point out terminological flaws that are not always insignificant; let us simply note, in this regard, a confusion between "non-dualism" and "monism." This book will certainly offer nothing new to those already somewhat familiar with Hindu doctrines; but perhaps it can at least contribute to drawing some of those who are not yet acquainted with them to their study.

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- **Hari Prasad Shastri – *The Avadhut Gita: translation and introduction***

(At the author's address, 30, Lansdowne Crescent, London, W. II).

This small volume is much more interesting than the previous one, for it deals with a little-known text; the word *avadhut* is roughly synonymous with *jîvan-mukta,* so the title could be translated as "Song of the Liberated One"; the author is called Dattatreya, but no other writings are attributed to him, and it is not known exactly where or when he lived. In the absence of the text, we cannot, of course, verify the accuracy of the translation in detail; we can at least point out an error concerning *âkâsha ,* which is actually "ether," and not "space" (dish *in Sanskrit) ;* and we wonder why *Brahma,* in this book as in the other, is consistently spelled *Brhama.* But, although we do not see how the translator could have found an idea of "love" in what is a work of pure "Knowledge," the spirit of the text is, in general, clearly well preserved and well rendered in the translation. This is a very remarkable exposition of *Adwaita doctrine,* which, as stated in the introduction, "breathes the purest spirit of the *Upanishads* and of Shri Shankaracharya" and which notably recalls the Atma-Bodha of the latter; therefore, reading it cannot be recommended too highly.

June 1935

- **Henry de Geymuller – *Swedenborg and psychic phenomena***

(Ernest Leroux, Paris).

The content of this large book could easily, it seems, have filled several volumes, and the frequent digressions make the exposition rather difficult to follow; it lacks a central thread, or at least, if there is one, it is not clearly apparent… The ideas of Swedenborg himself, particularly on the relationship between mind and body and on what he calls “limbo,” certainly have historical interest; but the arguments that are purported to be drawn from them against spiritualism are rather weak, and this can hardly be otherwise once one grants spiritualists their fundamental postulate, namely the possibility of real communication with the dead; whether there is any advantage in abstaining from these practices is a completely secondary question compared to this one. As for reincarnation, the discussion focuses only on “peripheral” aspects; Moreover, as we have often said, the demonstration of its metaphysical impossibility is the only decisive factor. Furthermore, we certainly do not wish to undertake a discussion here of how Swedenborg envisions the "spiritual world"; his language may sometimes betray his thought; but one rather curious thing to note is that he agrees with the spiritualists in that he only wants to find beings of origin there.

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human, including the angels themselves: a strange limitation of universal Possibility!

• Paul Brunton – *A Search in secret India*

(Rider and Co., London).

This account of a journey to India, and of encounters with characters of very varied character, is interesting and pleasant to read, although the tone, especially at the beginning, reminds us perhaps a little too much that the author is a journalist by profession.
Contrary to what too often occurs in Western works of this kind, stories of "phenomena" do not occupy an excessive place here; the author assures us, moreover, that this is not what particularly interests him, and it is doubtless for this reason that he was able to come into contact with certain things of a different order, despite a "critical spirit" which, taken to such an extreme, seems rather difficult to reconcile with profound spiritual aspirations. There is something quite curious here as an example of specifically Western, and even more properly Anglo-Saxon, reactions to the Orient; in particular, the difficulty in admitting the existence and value of "non-active activity" is quite characteristic in this respect. These resistances, with the struggles and hesitations they entail, last until the day they are finally overcome by the influence of the mysterious figure known as the "Maharishee." The pages devoted to the latter are certainly the most remarkable in the whole book, which we cannot think of summarizing, but which is surely better, as a whole, than many other works of a more pretentious nature, and which can only contribute to awakening in its readers a sympathy for Eastern spirituality, and perhaps, in some of them, an interest of a deeper order.

• Hari Prasad Shastri – *Book of Ram, The Bible of India by Mahatma Tulsidas rendered into English*

(Luzac and Co., London).

This "Book of Rama", written in Hindi in the 16th century CE, should not be confused with the ancient Sanskrit *Ramayana* of Valmiki; although it is said to have been inspired in Tulsidas by Rama himself, the appellation "Bible of India" is quite inappropriate, for, obviously, it would apply much better to the *Veda.*
In this book, the path of *bhakti* is primarily advocated, as is fitting in a work intended for a wide audience; however, its teaching is undeniably "non-dualistic" and clearly indicates the "Supreme Identity" as the ultimate goal of all "realization." The translation contains only excerpts, but these are carefully chosen to convey the essential doctrinal points; the accompanying notes are generally clear, although some confusion can be found, particularly concerning cyclical periods. It is regrettable, moreover, that the author attempted to translate all terms, even those which, lacking a true equivalent in Western languages, should be retained.

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as such, with an explanation attached; sometimes this results in rather strange assimilations: should we point out, for example, that the *Trimurti* is something quite different from the "Holy Trinity"?

• Dr Alexander Cannon – *The Invisible Influence*

Translated from the English by Grace Gassette and Georges Barbarin. (Éditions du Priory, Bazainville, Seine-et-Oise).

This book is presented as a "revelation of Tibetan secrets"; the author follows his name with several lines of academic and medical titles, culminating in those of "Yogi Kushog of Northern Tibet and Fifth Master of the Great White Lodge of the Himalayas"; and, moreover, we learn, within the volume, that he received from the "Grand Lama Convent" *(sic)* "the highest of titles, that of Knight Commander of Asia, which is equivalent to that of Earl in the United Kingdom!" All this is certainly very impressive, a little too much so to inspire confidence; in fact, when we examine the content of this "Master's" work, we find, alas, only hypnotism, telepathy, and more or less vulgar psychic phenomena, all presented in a very Western manner; in all this, not the slightest "secret," Tibetan or otherwise, and certainly not a single word of doctrine…

Furthermore, the book is very poorly structured: it's little more than a collection of anecdotes linked only by a series of conversations supposedly held during a journey, and without it even always being possible to know which speaker is speaking. There are also some major implausibilities: what, for example, can be said of a character who has "read a work by Pythagoras," or of a "Sage" who allows himself to be hypnotized by a snake? Some of the stories, presented as the author's personal recollections, give us the unfortunate impression of having been seen elsewhere: even in the travelogue that vaguely serves as a backdrop to it all, there are many details, including that of the crippled messenger, that remind us of some English adventure novel we read in our childhood, and whose reference we greatly regret not being able to recall, for it would have been interesting to push the comparison further than our memories allow. Moreover, the author sometimes contradicts himself: for example, perhaps forgetting that he set the scene in a cave, he then places there, for the purposes of his "experiments," a fireplace surmounted by a clock! Finally, an allusion to "dear old England," rediscovered "after so many long months spent in Tibetan savagery," seems to betray the true mentality of this supposed oriental initiate... For some years now, we have had a whole series of mystifications whose common feature is to be invariably placed under the auspices of the infamous "Great White Lodge" imagined by the theosophists; there is no doubt that we must now count yet another one; what designs could possibly be hidden behind all this?

Unfortunately, these kinds of things always make too many dupes: that is why we thought it best to insist on them more than they might seem to deserve in themselves: if their interest is nil, their danger, in an era like ours, is only too real.

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July 1935

• Sergius Gortan Ancona – *The Substance of Adam*

(Rider and Co., London).

This book presents itself as expounding "a system of cosmogony based on Western tradition": but what tradition is it? It is certainly not Kabbalah, for although the idea of the "four worlds" is borrowed from it, the explanation given is not at all authentically Kabbalistic; this "cosmogony" is, moreover, terribly complicated and confused, and gives above all the impression of a frenetic agitation that reaches even the angelic hierarchies themselves! Here and there, one encounters a few notions from Hermeticism and especially Gnosticism; but the truth is that the author's great "authorities" are, as he himself indicates, Eliphas Lévi, Fabre d'Olivet, and Saint-Yves d'Alveydre. The works of these last two authors primarily inspired the second part, which contains a history of the "white race" that, presented in this condensed form, highlights their errors and fantasies far more than their truly worthwhile views. All of this is far from representing a "pure tradition of orthodox thought," and, what's more, a tradition proclaimed "superior to all others"; it is, in short, a book of a distinctly "occultist" spirit, which has nothing to do with the traditional spirit. The best parts, in our opinion, are, towards the end, the pages where the modern era is severely and justly criticized: but, if the author's intention was to glorify the West...

In writing, it must be admitted that it ends in a rather unfortunate way, and which resembles more a bankruptcy report than a triumphant hymn…

• Rudolf Steiner – *The Gospel of Saint John*

(Association of Spiritual Science, Paris).

This volume contains the French translation of a series of twelve lectures given in Hamburg in 1908. The author begins by rightly criticizing the methods of modern exegesis and the results they produce; but then, in order to accommodate his "anthroposophical" conceptions to the Gospel of Saint John, whose true author, according to him, is the resurrected Lazarus, he treats it in a way that is, to say the least, highly fanciful; and he even seems, in essence, to use it primarily as a pretext for expounding views which, to a large extent, and especially concerning human "evolution," are much more reminiscent of Madame Blavatsky 's *Secret Doctrine* than of any Rosicrucian tradition. What he calls "spiritual science" is, moreover, only such because of one of the confusions we point out elsewhere in our article, for, for him, "spiritual" is practically synonymous with "invisible," quite simply; And, naturally, his conception of initiation is strongly affected by this.

In this regard, let us point out something rather curious: on the one hand, he claims that the

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Initiations would have lost their purpose since the coming of Christ, whose effect would have been to make accessible to all what the ancient mysteries reserved for a small number; but, on the other hand, he describes what he calls Christian initiation and Rosicrucian initiation, between which he seems moreover to make a certain difference; it is really not very easy to see how all this can be reconciled!

• Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *The Darker Side of Dawn*

(Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, Washington).

This booklet contains some very interesting observations on cosmogonic dualities, primarily as represented by the opposition between "light" and "darkness," and on certain related topics, including the symbolism of the serpent. We should also note a rather curious connection between the subject of the Mahabharata and the Vedic conflict between the *Devas* and the *Asuras,* which might also suggest similarities with what is found in other traditional forms, as well as with the use of the color black as a symbol of the unmanifest. It is only regrettable that the author has limited himself to outlining all these considerations rather succinctly, in barely twenty pages, and we can only hope that he will have the opportunity to return to them and develop them further in future works.

November 1935

• Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *The Rig-Veda as Land-Náma-Bók*

(Luzac and Co., London).

This title alludes to an ancient Icelandic book, literally "Book of the Taking of the Land," considered here as comparable to the *Rigveda* in certain respects: it is not simply a matter of possession by conquerors, but the author's thesis, which seems perfectly sound to us, is that in all traditional writings of this kind, what is actually described is the very manifestation of beings at the origin and their establishment in a world symbolically designated as "land," so that the geographical and historical allusions, if any, have only symbolic and analogical value, as any event can indeed have due to macrocosmic and microcosmic correspondences. These views are supported by an examination of the meaning of a number of frequent and characteristic terms, which gives rise to very interesting considerations touching on many doctrinal points; we are here far removed from the crudely material interpretations of Orientalists. Will they at least agree to give it some thought?

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• Sri Ramana Maharshi – *Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala*

(Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India).

The author of these hymns is none other than the "Maharishee" mentioned by Paul Brunton in his book, **A Search in Secret India*,* which we reviewed here some time ago. *Arunachala* is the name of a mountain considered a sacred place and a symbol of the "Heart of the World"; it represents the immanence of the "Supreme Consciousness" in all beings. These hymns exude an undeniable spirituality; at first, one might think they are merely a path of *bhakti,* but the latter encompasses all the diverse, yet by no means mutually exclusive, paths in the unity of a synthesis proceeding from a truly universal perspective. In the preface to this translation, Grant Duff aptly contrasts Eastern spirituality with Western philosophy; it is all too true that the subtleties of dialectic serve little purpose other than to waste time!

• G. Constant Lounsbery – *Buddhist Meditation, a study of its theory and practice according to the Southern School*

(Adrien Maisonneuve, Paris).

This little book is a rather elementary exposition, with a marked tendency to "rationalize" everything, and a constant preoccupation with selecting only what is deemed usable for Westerners. We generally have little appreciation for this kind of "adaptation"; at least this one seems, all things considered, quite harmless, especially when compared to the "psychic training" methods advocated by theosophists and other similar schools. Some linguistic lapses are regrettable, particularly the use of Anglicisms, and also a typographical layout whose effect is not entirely pleasing.

• I. de Manziarly – *Asian Peregrinations*

(Paul Geuthner, Paris).

This volume contains, as the author states, "impressions" gathered during several journeys to various regions: Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Ceylon, India, Indochina, China, Korea, and Japan; unpretentious impressions, but very pleasant to read, and which testify to an undeniable, frankly admitted, sympathy for the things of the Orient. Fortunately, this sympathy has not been stifled by the "Orientalist" readings indicated at the end; it is true that these were neither "scholarly" nor "reportage," and, certainly, this is much better in every respect.

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• **L. Charbonneau-Lassay – *The "World Egg" of the ancients and the presence of the fossil sea urchin in ancient burials in the West***

(Extract from the Louis Arnould Miscellany, *French Publishing and Bookselling Society, Poitiers).*

In this very interesting brochure, Mr. Charbonneau-Lassay studies the symbolism of the "World Egg" in the various ancient traditions, then its representation among the Druids by the "Serpent's Egg", *ovum anguinum,* which is in fact identified with the fossil sea urchin; he explains by this the presence of this sea urchin in certain tombs and even, more remarkably, inside tumuli which contained nothing else (one could undoubtedly see in this the mound representing the "sacred mountain"); and, to conclude, he considers the traces of this symbolism which have survived in the Christian era, notably in certain doctrines more or less directly related to Hermeticism.

• **Francesco Vivona – *L'Anima di Virgilio***

(Casa Editrice "Ausonia", Roma).

The two lectures collected in this volume give only a very "exoteric" idea of Virgil: in this poet who is presented to us as being torn between natural religious aspirations and the influence of Epicurean philosophy, we can hardly recognize the one who put so many initiatory details into his works, the one whom, for this very reason, Dante took as his guide on his mysterious journey; and to see in *the Aeneid* the "poem of pain" is a "psychological" interpretation which, like all those of the same order, cannot go very far nor explain anything in depth; it is certainly not by attributing to the ancients the special concerns of the moderns that we will ever come to truly understand them.

• **Francesco Vivona – *Critical note to the Epistle of Seneca***

(Casa Editrice "Ausonia", Roma).

This is merely an attempt to reconstruct certain passages that are more or less altered in the manuscripts; it does not, in short, shed any light on Seneca's actual thought, but it is an example of the difficulty sometimes encountered in finding the exact text of ancient authors; how, under these conditions, can so many people dare to boast of the supposed superiority of writing over oral transmission to avoid any distortion?

• **Alice A. Bailey – *The Next Three Years***

We recall having previously seen the contents of this brochure published as articles in journals with more or less theosophical leanings, under the

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signature of an anonymous "Tibetan"; could this person then be one and the same as Mrs. Bailey himself, or, which probably amounts to the same thing, does he have only a purely "astral" existence? To be honest, we are not entirely sure, because he also bears some resemblance to a character whose various manifestations have been reported to us from different quarters… In any case, he was supposedly established by a hypothetical "Hierarchy" in which it is not difficult to recognize the infamous "Grand White Lodge"; this, curiously designated as a "Company of Enlightened Intellects," is said to have founded, to carry out this "plan," a "Group of Artisans of the New Era," whose members are supposedly connected to each other "subjectively, intuitively, and sometimes telepathically," and whose activity, according to what is said, is exercised in the most profane domains: one would even find politicians and businessmen among them! All this certainly does not present much interest in itself; If we dwell on this, it is to show once again how widespread all these fantastic stories are currently; and, as we have already said many times, there is a definite danger here; those who inspire them (we do not say those who propagate them) surely have some suspicious design, and, from "counter-initiation" to "pseudo-initiation", there are perhaps more "infiltrations" than one would be tempted to believe…

December 1935

• Luigi Valli – *The Moral Struttura of the Dantesco Universe*

(Casa Editrice “Ausonia”, Roma).

This volume is a collection of the author's works on Dante that had previously remained unpublished or were scattered throughout various journals. Alongside specific commentaries on several cantos of the *Divine Comedy,* it contains supplementary notes to his earlier works and responses to criticisms leveled against him. The whole has been divided into two parts, depending on whether the writings predate or follow the discovery of the multiple symmetries between the two symbols of the Cross and the Eagle, which the author saw as the "key" to the entire *Divine Comedy .* In our opinion, this may well be one of the "keys," but not the only one, for while the question of the relationship between the two powers represented respectively by the Papacy and the Empire undoubtedly holds considerable importance in Dante's thought, it would be an exaggeration to reduce his entire thought to it. It is also likely that the author himself, had he had the time, would have corrected or supplemented his views on many points, especially since, towards the end, he seems to have been led to focus more and more on the truly "hermetic" aspect of Dante. He would undoubtedly have realized, in particular, that certain ideas he considers "original" are, on the contrary, strictly traditional in character: for example, the one that makes Paradise

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An earthly, necessary step on the path to heavenly Paradise, for example, is fundamentally nothing other than an expression of the relationship that has always existed between the "lesser mysteries" and the "greater mysteries." The very symbolism of the Cross and the Eagle could have been further explored in certain aspects: the author finds an interpretation by *Pietà e Giustizia,* that is, "Mercy and Justice," insufficient; but, perhaps unbeknownst to the one who proposed it, these two terms correspond precisely to the two sides of the "sephirotic tree," and this simple observation certainly gives it a completely different meaning, especially if one adds to it the consideration of a certain figuration of the two powers by the two faces of Janus… There would also be much to say on the question of initiatory secrecy, which here seems a little too reduced to a matter of simple prudence, which is only entirely secondary; But we have already explained this sufficiently on other occasions. What is quite right is to consider Dante's conception as constituting, in a way, a "super-Catholicism"; it would even be difficult to find a more accurate expression to characterize it; and we would add that this also stems directly from the very nature of the esoteric tradition to which Dante belonged. Moreover, there are, throughout this volume, numerous highly interesting considerations, which only serve to highlight the fact that such a work remained unfinished; we cannot consider pointing them out in detail at present, but perhaps we will have the opportunity to return to some of them later.

- **Camille Savoure – *A Look at the Temples of France Masonry***

(Les Éditions Initiatiques, Paris).

This book comprises chapters of quite diverse nature: some are primarily "autobiographical," in which the author shows, in particular, how he gradually modified his views, bringing them considerably closer to the traditional spirit; others are more general in scope, in which he sets forth his perspective on Freemasonry from various points of view. The intention is certainly excellent, although, from a strictly initiatory and symbolic standpoint, the considerations developed therein remain somewhat "external." At the end, a number of documents are reproduced, intended to provide a more accurate understanding of Freemasonry than that commonly held in the secular world. and an appendix explains the reasons for the revival in France of the "Rectified Rite," of which the author is the principal promoter: "a Masonic center free from all political influence," as he says, is certainly, in the present circumstances, a most desirable thing, if one does not want to see the last vestiges of Western initiation that still remain irretrievably lost… – We will allow ourselves to point out a rather singular historical error (p. 282): L.-Cl. de Saint-Martin was never a "canon of the Collegiate Church" (of Lyon?), but an officer, and, while he was a member of several Masonic rites, he founded none himself; moreover, there was never a "Masonic system" authentically bearing the name "Martinism," and the truth is that, when Saint-

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Martin withdrew from the various organizations of which he had been a part, in order to adopt a much more mystical than initiatory attitude, and certainly incompatible with the constitution of any "Order".

- **Grace Gassette and Georges Barbarin – *The Key***
  (Prieuré Publishing, Bazainville, Seine-et-Oise).

Although this volume, which bears the Cartesian maxim "I think, therefore I am" as its epigraph, is published anonymously, it clearly comes from the same "source" as the book by Dr. Alexander Cannon that we discussed here a few months ago. It contains a little bit of everything: numerous quotations from the Gospel, accompanied by often questionable interpretations, are mixed with purported teachings of the "Sages of Tibet" (?), and also with ideas much more genuinely borrowed from modern philosophy and science; and the most popularized *Hatha Yoga* exercises appear alongside "affirmations" that curiously recall the Coué method. The whole thing is roughly on the same intellectual level as the countless American productions that claim to teach the means of achieving "success" in one field or another. Moreover, to appreciate its spirit, one need only read the lines of the foreword where it is said that "the age of initiation is over," and that "the advancement of humanity in the paths of goodness and knowledge (!) now makes it possible to give high teaching to all"; if these words were written in good faith, they hardly testify in favor of "knowledge," nor even, more simply, to the perspicacity of their author!

January 1936

- **Hari Prasad Shastri – *A Path to God-Realization***
  (The Shanti-Sadan Publishing Committee, London).

The author states that the ideas formulated in this little book came to him while meditating on the teachings of Lao Tzu; however, one finds in it, in truth, nothing specifically inspired by Taoism, but rather the elementary outline of a "preparatory" method that could be applied independently of any defined traditional form. Prescriptions of a "moral" and "devotional" nature occupy a perhaps excessive place, while what relates to knowledge, and which should be the essential element, is reduced to very little. There is also, at the outset, a notion of "spirituality" that seems to us rather vague and insufficient; but where we can only fully agree with the author is when he declares that "psychic phenomena" should not be associated with "spiritual life," recalling that Tulsidas, in his *Ramayana,* asks to be preserved from

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the temptation of the so-called "powers", and that Shankarâchârya warns that they are merely a trap from which it is difficult to escape.

- **P. Mandonnet, OP – *Dante the Theologian: An Introduction to Understanding the Life, Works, and Art of Dante Alighieri***

(Desclée de Brouwer et Cie, Paris).

That Dante, viewed through a certain aspect of his work, can appear as a theologian is undeniable, and this aspect deserves to be placed in its rightful position among the others; but one must be careful not to reduce everything to this, and we fear that this tendency is somewhat that of Father
Mandonnet, especially since he declares, at the very beginning of his book, that he generally regrets the absence, in the study of Dante, of "systematic views"... that Perhaps the very nature of the subject cannot accommodate it. We cannot help but feel a certain astonishment at seeing it asserted that "Dante pushed the spirit of system beyond the implausible," when, on the contrary, and fortunately, he appears to us to be entirely untouched by it, or again that "Dante's art, through one of its fundamental elements, symbolism, is an art of mystification," when, if it is true that "he intentionally provides the reader with every opportunity to mislead," this is undoubtedly not without very serious reasons, which we have discussed at length on other occasions, so we need not return to them here. As for the opinion that considers Dante a "Thomist," it seems to have always been quite widespread among his commentators, especially ecclesiastical ones; One might object that, if Dante does indeed quite often adopt the language of Saint Thomas, it is perhaps also to "mislead the reader," at least to some extent; moreover, he sometimes also uses the language of Saint Augustine or others, depending on what advantage he finds in it, and this is certainly proof that he is not "systematic." In any case, the main "novelty" of this work probably lies in the assertion that Dante was a cleric; Certainly, the thing itself is not impossible, but even if we admit it, we should not exaggerate its importance, which would ultimately amount to that of studies that provided him with certain means of expression that he might otherwise have lacked, because, frankly, we do not see what other influence a simple school education could have had on a mind like that… Moreover, the argument intended to justify this assertion, and which is based mainly on a certain interpretation of the *Vita Nova,* does not seem very convincing to us: all this, which is obviously deliberately ambiguous, could mean something else entirely, and we do not see at all why, to explain it, one could only “proceed in two ways, philosophically and theologically,” as if all reality could be reduced to these two points of view alone. Thus, we already had the impression that some confusion might lie at the heart of this entire argument, even before reaching the end, which provided us with the most striking proof, for, quoting this sentence: “And this doubt is impossible to resolve *for anyone who is not of the same degree of faithfulness in Love ;* and to those who are, what could resolve these uncertain words appears clearly,” the author adds: “Dante calls upon a cleric to unveil the secret

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concealed from his own clerical status”: thus, he has simply confused initiation and clerical status! Apart from this very serious error, there are certain points on which he is entirely correct, particularly concerning Dante’s “ladies,” who are indeed, as he says, “pure symbols,” although, it hardly needs to be said, he is completely unaware of their esoteric significance. He also presents some interesting considerations on the symbolic use of numbers, but these never go very far or very deep; and why insist that this symbolism is “of theological origin”? Certainly, theologians, like others, can use it in their field, and they have indeed done so, but this is only a particular and rather limited application; And, when Dante went beyond it, he did not need to "create a personal theory" for that, but only to appeal to traditional sources of another order… The interpretations offered too often give a strange impression of exclusivity and "reduction"; and it seems that what they leave out is precisely what would allow us to get to the heart of the matter: true symbolism is neither "metaphor" nor "allegory," and it is by no means "of a human order"; it is indeed "sacred science" that Dante constantly has in mind, but for him it is not simply synonymous with theology; the idea of the "journey" had a profound initiatory meaning long before it received a theological interpretation; the conception of the celestial spheres is something quite different from a "poetic fiction"; and we could continue almost indefinitely to cite examples of this kind. It is quite true that "it is an illusion to see only the superficial and purely external side of Dante, that is to say, the literary side in the ordinary sense of the word"; but to see only the theological side in addition, is that not still to stop at something external, at a second "shell," so to speak? And, while it is true that theological knowledge can help to understand Dante to a certain extent, esoteric and initiatory knowledge, even incomplete, would certainly allow one to understand him much better; but one can be a very competent "Thomist," which Father Mandonnet undoubtedly is, and not even suspect the existence of these things, which nevertheless held such a large place throughout the Middle Ages.

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March 1936

• Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *Angel and Titan: An Essay in Vedic Ontology*

(From the Journal of the American Oriental Society, *vol. 55, no. 4).*

This important study follows *The Darker Side of the Dawn,* which we reviewed previously* ; the main idea the author develops is that the *Devas ,* or "Angels," and the *Asuras ,* or "Titans"—respectively powers of Light and powers of Darkness in the Rig-Veda—although opposed in their actions, are nonetheless of the same essence, their distinction lying in their orientation or state. *The Asura* is a *Deva* in potential, the *Deva* is still an *Asura* by its original nature; and the two designations can be applied to one and the same entity according to its mode of operation, as seen, for example, in the case of *Varuna.* Furthermore, while the *Devas* are usually represented in the forms of men and birds, the *Asuras* are represented in the forms of animals, and particularly serpents; From this stems a series of highly interesting considerations on the various aspects of serpent symbolism, primarily from a cosmogonic perspective. Many other questions are addressed in this work, and we cannot list them all in detail: let us mention only the nature *of Agni* and its relationship to *Indra,* the significance of sacrifice, that of *Soma,* the symbolism of the Sun and its rays, of the spider and its web, etc. All of this is approached in a distinctly traditional spirit, as these few sentences from the conclusion will demonstrate: “What must be viewed from the outside and

Logically, as a dual operation of alternating sleep and wakefulness, of potentiality and actuality, is inwardly and truly the pure and simple nature of the Supreme Identity… Neither Vedic ontology nor the formulas by which it is expressed are particular to the *Rig-Veda,* but can just as easily be recognized in all extra-Indian forms of the universal and unanimous tradition.

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* [July 1935.]

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April 1936

• Sri Ramana Maharshi – *Truth Revealed (Sad-Vidyâ)*

(Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India).

We reported, a few months ago* , the translation of five hymns of the "Maharshi"; here we have that of a work dealing more directly with doctrinal principles, and condensing, in the form of a brief series of aphorisms, the essential teaching concerning the "Supreme Reality", or the "Absolute Consciousness" which must be realized as the "Self".

• Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni – *Sri Ramana Gita*

(Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India).

This other small book contains a series of conversations between the Maharshi and some of his disciples, including the author himself, on various questions concerning spiritual realization and the means of attaining it. We will especially highlight the chapters concerning *hridaya-vidya,* "mind control," the relationship between *jnana* and *siddha,* and the state of *jivanmukta.* All of this, which cannot be summarized, can, like the contents of the previous volume, provide excellent starting points for meditation.

• Mrs Rhys Davids – *The Birth of Indian Psychology and its development in Buddhism*

(Luzac and Co., London).

It seems highly doubtful to us, even after reading this book, that anything that could be called an "Indian psychology" ever existed, or, in other words, that the "psychological" point of view, as understood by modern Westerners, was ever considered in India. The author acknowledges that the study of human beings there has always been conducted from the inside out, and not in the reverse direction as in the West; but it is precisely for this reason that psychology, which is limited to endlessly analyzing a few superficial modifications of being, could not be the object of the slightest interest there. It is only in Buddhism, and undoubtedly as a consequence of its tendency to deny or at least ignore transcendent principles, that one encounters considerations that might, to a certain extent, lend themselves to being interpreted in psychological terms; but even there, one should not push the comparisons too far. As for wanting to find psychology even in the *Upanishads,* that's

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* [November 1935.]

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to demonstrate a perfect incomprehension, which is manifested all too clearly by incredible confusions of language: the "soul", the "spirit", the "self", the "man", all these terms are, at every moment, used indistinctly and as if they designated one and the same thing! It hardly needs to be said that we see here constantly the bias, common to all orientalists, of reducing everything to a purely human "thought", which would have begun with a kind of state of "childhood", and which would then have "evolved" progressively; Between such a point of view and that of tradition, there is obviously no possible common ground… The so-called “historical method” is, moreover, in fact far from excluding more or less fanciful hypotheses: this is how Mrs. Rhys Davids imagined, under the name of *Sakya,* something that she believes to have been original Buddhism, and which she thinks she can reconstruct by simply eliminating, as “late” additions, everything that does not agree with her conception of the beginnings of what she calls a *world-religion,* and, first and foremost, everything that appears to have a “monastic” character; what such a procedure can actually prove is only that she herself is affected by a violent “anti-monastic” prejudice! We would never finish if we wanted to find, in her interpretations, the traces of her own religious or philosophical preferences; But, as she is quite convinced that anyone who does not share them is thereby devoid of any "critical spirit", it would certainly be of no use... In any case, after reading a work of this kind, we are certainly much better informed about what the author thinks than about what those he proposed to study "historically" might have actually thought; and this at least is not without a certain "psychological" interest!

- **Rudolf Steiner – *Egyptian Myths and Mysteries***

(Association of Spiritual Science, Paris).

In this series of twelve lectures given in Leipzig in 1908, the author, with curious insistence, denies wanting to explain symbols; he only wants to see in them the expression of what he calls "spiritual facts," by which he means events that are supposed to have taken place, during one or another period in the history of humanity, in the psychic, or even simply "etheric," realm, because, as we have already had occasion to point out regarding another volume, his conception of the "spiritual" is more than vague… Here we find once again, concerning human "races" and "sub-races," some of the fantastic stories with which we know all too well; what we always find most astonishing in this is that one can make accepted as "Rosicrucian teachings" assertions which, despite a few minor modifications, are clearly derived directly from the *Secret Doctrine* of Madame Blavatsky!

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• Bhikshu Wai-Tao and Dwight Goddard – *Laotzu's Tao and Wu-Wei, a new translation*

(Dwight Goddard, Santa Barbara, California; Luzac and Co, London).

This volume contains a translation of the *Tao Te Ching ,* the main fault of which, it seems to us, is that it too often takes on a sentimental tone which is far removed from the spirit of Taoism; perhaps this is due in part to the "Buddhist" tendencies of its authors, at least if we judge from their introduction.

Next comes a translation of Henry Borel's *Wu-Wei ,* which we discussed here previously, by ME Reynolds. Finally, the book concludes with a historical outline of Taoism by Dr. Kiang Kang-Hu, unfortunately presented from a very external perspective: to speak of "philosophy" and "religion" is to completely misunderstand the initiatory essence of Taoism, whether as a purely metaphysical doctrine or even in the various applications derived from it within the traditional sciences.

• Guido Cavalluci – *Intelligenza comes forza rivoluzionaria*

(Biblioteca del Secola Fascista, Libreria Angelo Signorelli, Roma).

It is curious to note that the word "revolutionary" has now taken on, in Italy, a meaning almost diametrically opposed to the one it has always had and still has everywhere else, to such an extent that some even go so far as to apply it to ideas of traditional restoration; if one were not aware of this, one would certainly misunderstand a title like that of the present book. What is interesting in it from our point of view is not, of course, what relates more or less to politics or "administration," but what concerns questions of principle; and, first of all, we find in it a very good critique of the modern conception of the "intellectual," which certainly has nothing in common with true intellectuality. This entirely secular, rationalist, and democratic conception is opposed to that of the ancient "sage," endowed with a sacred character in the strict sense of the word, and whose place in the social organization must properly be at the "center"; The author explicitly states this, but perhaps he doesn't sufficiently emphasize the consequence, namely that the "wise man," from this perspective, exerts his influence through a kind of "act of presence," without having to involve himself in any more or less external activities. In any case, it is precisely this role and character of the "wise man" that should be effectively restored; but, unfortunately, when one considers the possible application, there is a strange disproportion between this result and the means proposed to achieve it: there is a strong risk, it seems to us, of falling back into the realm of pseudo-intellectuality, by going so far as to consider university "culture," which is indeed its most accomplished type; or, if one truly wants to ensure that only the representatives of genuine intellectuality, or, what amounts to the same thing, of pure spirituality, have their place at the top of the hierarchy, is there not a risk that this place will remain empty?

The author acknowledges that it is currently so, and in this regard he raises the problem of the spiritual "elite," but in a way that only too clearly demonstrates how difficult it is.

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to resolve it under current conditions: as will be readily understood from the considerations we have recently presented, the formation of the "elite" cannot be a simple matter of "education," even if it is "comprehensive"; and furthermore, assuming this "elite" to exist, we do not see it grouping itself together in an "academy," or in any other institution similarly displaying itself to the public; with such views, we find ourselves, alas! very far from the "center" that invisibly governs all things…

- **Gabriel Trarieux d'Egmont – *Prometheus or the Mystery of Man***

(Adyar Edition, Paris).

Those who, lacking the time or courage to read Mrs. 's *Secret Doctrine* Blavatsky, however, who would like to form an opinion, will find in this book a fairly faithful overview, at least as far as the history of human races is concerned; we know well enough what we think of these fantastical conceptions, so far removed from true traditional teachings, and we do not intend to return to them. The author's principal originality lies in having given, as it were, the Greek myth of Prometheus as the center of this entire history, naturally interpreted, for this purpose, in a rather peculiar and somewhat questionable way. Furthermore, he demonstrates a certain "eclecticism," which consists of occasionally incorporating ideas borrowed from other sources, but especially from the various forms of occultism and other modern counterfeits of tradition. Finally, he firmly believes in the "Masters" of the Theosophical Society; If there is anything real in that, it is certainly not what he thinks, and we fear that he is very much mistaken about their true situation in relation to these "dark powers" that he mentions several times: the "pseudo-initiation" serves all too well, externally, the ends aimed at by the representatives of the "counter-initiation," for there not sometimes be some infiltrations from the latter to the former…

June 1936

- **Roger Glardon – *Spiritism in the face of history and science, of religion***

(P. Rouge et Cie, Lausanne, and Librairie Fischbacher, Paris).

The author is a Protestant pastor, and his book was presented as a thesis at the Faculty of Theology of the Free Church of the Canton of Vaud; this means that his perspective on combating spiritualism is necessarily quite specific. The historical section contains unfortunate inaccuracies, which tend to support those spiritualists who want to trace their theories and practices back to...

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Antiquity; the documentation is, moreover, quite unreliable, since, for India for example, the author goes so far as to accept certain tales from Jacolliot. One can see here how much ambiguity the word "spirits" lends itself to, a word which, in essence, means nothing; and, on the other hand, to claim to equate even the Catholic cult of saints with spiritualism reveals rather peculiar prejudices. The exposition of the facts, which follows, is certainly better; but this is not the most important part, for, in reality, there are no "spiritual phenomena," there is only a certain explanation of these phenomena. In this respect, the author endeavors to show that the various other hypotheses that can be considered depending on the case are sufficient to explain all the observed facts, so that there is no need to resort to the spiritualist hypothesis; However, since he seems nonetheless to consider this hypothesis as just as plausible as the others, and since he certainly doesn't demonstrate its absurdity, his refutation remains, in short, quite inadequate and far from definitive. As for the purely religious aspect, apart from certain reflections that are simply common sense and that rather effectively highlight the ridiculousness of the so-called "spiritualist religion," it goes without saying that it can hardly convince anyone but the author's coreligionists.

Finally, a last part is devoted to the dangers of spiritualism; here at least, we can only fully approve; and perhaps the author should even have insisted a little more on these considerations, since the very purpose of his study is, he says, "to discourage those who would be tempted to embark on this path, fatal from all points of view."

• Édouard Arnaud – *In Search of Truth: Art, Science, Occultism, Religions*

(Leymarie Publishers, Paris).

The greatest merit of this large volume is undoubtedly the author's evident sincerity; he seeks the truth (or perhaps "his" truth, since he is very "relativistic") through considerations based on modern physics, "metapsychics," and the various forms of occultism. It is no wonder that, under these conditions, he arrives only at hypotheses of highly questionable value. He attributes particular importance to Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine ;* it is true that he refuses to take into account what seems to him overly M

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"Unverifiable," but he nonetheless believes it to be the authentic expression of an "archaic tradition"; thus, his information on Eastern doctrines, drawn from such a source, is eminently fanciful. Furthermore, he brings to his research a mentality clearly influenced both by his Protestant upbringing and by his profession as an architect; and this clearly demonstrates even more

the purely "individual" character, as far removed as possible from the impersonality of true knowledge.

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- **H. Mamessier – *In Search of Spiritual Forces***

(Adyar Editions, Paris).

This brochure is one indication, among many others, that even in circles where people profess to believe most firmly in "progress," they no longer dare to find the present era admirable from all points of view; but, apart from this, which is all in all purely negative, the author shows above all a fanatical hatred against everything called "dogma" and "revelation," and he also seems to be completely ignorant of the true nature of the "spiritual," with which his moral and social views and his plans for political and economic reforms certainly have little in common.

July 1936

- **Albert Lantoine – *History of French Freemasonry: Freemasonry in the State***

(Émile Nourry, Paris).

This book follows a first volume entitled *Freemasonry at home,* published about ten years ago, but it can also be read very well separately.
The author, in studying the relationship between Freemasonry and the various governments that succeeded one another in France from Louis XV to the Third Republic, demonstrates remarkable impartiality, a quality all the more commendable as it is rarely encountered on such a subject, which is generally treated with a strongly marked bias in one direction or the other. Consequently, he will undoubtedly displease both most Freemasons and their adversaries, for example, when he demolishes the legend that Freemasonry played a considerable role in preparing the Revolution. Curiously, this legend, which originated with anti-Masonic writers such as Abbé Barruel, was eventually adopted, much later, by the Freemasons themselves. In this regard, it is worth noting that, among the figures of the 18th century...

Of the centuries that are commonly regarded as having been linked to Freemasonry, there are many for which there is not the slightest serious indication that they ever actually were; this is the case, among others, of the vast majority of the Encyclopedists. Where the author departs somewhat from his impartial attitude, it seems to us, is when he speaks of what he calls the "responsibility of the higher degrees" at the origin of the aforementioned legend; he does so in the manner of someone who does not appear to think that there could be any more or less profound meaning in these degrees, to such an extent that he goes so far as to call them "unimportant games," but "of eminent clumsiness," which is a very "profane" view; and why, at the very least, does he not point out the enormous fancifulness of the interpretations of Hebrew words appearing in a ritual reproduced (p. 152) from an opponent? This relates to

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Moreover, a more general criticism that we could formulate with regard to this work is that one sometimes senses a tendency to treat too lightly everything that relates to symbolism and ritual; but, because of the subject itself, this fault is not very apparent, and, in short, it does not detract from the very real merit and interest that such a work presents from the purely historical point of view, which is indeed the one in which the author intended to place himself.

- **André Lebey – *The Truth about Freemasonry by documents, including The Secret of the Triangle***

(Éditions Eugène Figuière, Paris).

This book is a collection of speeches delivered at the Grand Chapter of the Grand Orient of France; and the author, by simply bringing them together without adding any commentary, has proposed to show what the work of the high degrees is like, and to correct the false ideas that the public generally has on this subject.
We cannot attempt here to summarize or even list all the diverse questions addressed; let us simply point out, among those the author proposes for study in the Higher Degree Lodges as particularly important, that of the relationship between East and West, on which he develops interesting considerations, although one might regret that his somewhat indirect knowledge of the East leads him to attribute a little too much importance to certain questionable Western views, such as those of Spengler and Keyserling, for example, or to the pronouncements of some Orientals who are far less "representative" than he seems to believe. In this regard, let us add that the idea of an understanding between different civilizations based on the establishment of a "new humanism," extending far beyond the narrow confines of "Greco-Latin culture" alone, while certainly very laudable, will always appear entirely insufficient from an Eastern perspective, as will anything that appeals only to purely "human" elements. – The final chapter, *"The Secret of the Temple,"* reminds Freemasons, who are all too forgetful of such matters today, of the links—certainly more than "ideal," whatever some may say—that bind them to the Templars. It is only a rather brief historical sketch, but nonetheless very worthwhile. It seems beyond doubt that, as the author states, and although there may have been something else of which this was merely a consequence, the Templars possessed a "great secret of reconciliation" between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As we ourselves have already stated on another occasion, did they not share the same "wine" as the Kabbalists and the Sufis, and does not Boccaccio, their heir as "Faithful of Love," have Melchizedek affirm that the truth of the three religions is indisputable… because they are one in their profound essence?

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• Emmanuel Malynski and Léon de Poncins – *The Occult War*

(Gabriel Beauchesne, Paris).

Here, as in the previous works of Mr. Léon de Poncins, which we have already had occasion to discuss* , there are many very accurate observations regarding the critique of the modern world; the authors, who rightly denounce common errors such as the belief that revolutions are "spontaneous movements," are among those who think that the modern deviation, whose stages they study more specifically during the 19th century,

century, must necessarily respond to a well-defined "plan," at least consciously so among those who direct this "occult war" against everything that presents a traditional character, intellectually or socially. However, when it comes to assigning "responsibility," we have many reservations; the matter is not so simple or easy, it must be acknowledged, since, by definition, what is at stake is not outwardly visible, and the apparent pseudo-leaders are merely more or less unconscious instruments. In any case, there is a tendency here to considerably exaggerate the role attributed to the Jews, to the point of assuming that they alone ultimately lead the world, without making certain necessary distinctions regarding them; How can one fail to notice, for example, that those who take an active part in certain events are merely Jews entirely detached from their own tradition, and who, as always happens in such cases, have retained little more than the flaws of their race and the negative aspects of its particular mentality? Yet there are passages (notably pp. 105-

110) which touch quite closely on certain truths concerning "counter-initiation": it is quite true that these are not "interests" of any kind, which can only serve to move vulgar instruments, but a "faith" which constitutes "an unfathomable metapsychic mystery for even the highest intelligence of ordinary man"; and it is no less true that "there is a current of Satanism in history"... But this current is not only directed against Christianity (and it is perhaps this too restricted way of looking at things that is the cause of many "optical errors"); it is also, in exactly the same way, against every tradition, whether it be of the East or of the West, and without excluding Judaism. As for Freemasonry, we may well surprise the authors if we say that the infiltration of modern ideas, to the detriment of the initiatory spirit, has made it not one of the agents of the "conspiracy," but on the contrary, one of its first victims; and yet, by reflecting on certain current efforts to "democratize" Catholicism itself, which have certainly not escaped their notice, they should be able, by analogy, to understand what we mean by this… And dare we add that a certain will to mislead research, by arousing and maintaining various "obsessions" (regardless of what this

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* *[The Secret Forces of the Revolution* (October 1930),
Rejected by the Press (June 1932),
Storm over the World, or the Bankruptcy of Progress (March 1934),
The Dictatorship of the Occult Powers: Freemasonry according *to its secret documents* (November 1934).

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(whether that of Freemasonry, the Jews, the Jesuits, the "yellow peril," or some other), is precisely also an integral part of the "plan" they intend to denounce, and that the real "underpinnings" of certain anti-Masonic escapades are particularly instructive in this regard? We know only too well that, by insisting on this, we risk being disagreeable to no one, on any side whatsoever; but is that a sufficient reason not to tell the truth?

• Hari Prasad Shastri – *Meditation, its Theory and Practice*

(The Shanti-Sadan Publishing Committee, London).

This small book contains a fairly simple, yet generally accurate, explanation of what concentration and meditation are, and how one can gradually practice them. The author also rightly points out that meditation is not an end in itself, but merely a method for attaining Knowledge, which, fundamentally, is nothing other than "Self-realization." He also quite rightly emphasizes the necessity of traditional teaching; however, a little more precision would have been desirable here, as many readers might believe that it is enough to "ideally" connect with a tradition, even if only by studying its teachings in books, whereas this is not the case and the connection must be direct and effective. Along the same lines, we should note another shortcoming: it is quite true that *mantras* are only valid if they are recited in the sacred language of the tradition to which they belong, and not translated into any other language; but why not also warn that, in addition, they can only be fully effective if they have been transmitted regularly and according to traditionally prescribed rites? Perhaps this is to avoid discouraging Westerners too much, for whom this condition cannot be met; however, we believe it is still better to warn them of the limitations of the results they can normally expect than to expose them to more unfortunate disappointments later on.

• Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*

(Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.).

This important work contains the interpretation of the principal symbols used by Buddhism, but which, in fact, predate it and are actually of Vedic origin, for, as the author very rightly states, "Buddhism in India represents a heterodox development, all that is metaphysically correct in its ontology and symbolism being derived from the primordial tradition." The symbols that have been applied to the Buddha are primarily those of *the Vedic Agni ,* and this not later, but, on the contrary, from the time when he was not yet represented in human form. Those of these symbols that are studied more specifically here (and of which the plates reproduce a series of significant examples) are: the tree, which is,

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as in all traditions, the "Tree of Life" or the "World Tree"; the *vajra,* with its double meaning of "thunderbolt" and "diamond", the latter corresponding to the ideas of indivisibility and immutability; the lotus, representing the "ground" or the "support" of manifestation; the wheel, which, both as "wheel of the Law" and as "cosmic wheel", represents the operation of principles in manifestation.
The author emphasizes the very close relationship these various symbols have with the concept of the "World Axis," from which it follows that the geographical locations themselves, in Buddhist legend, are fundamentally purely analogical. He also addresses a great many other highly interesting points, such as the similarity of the *vajra* symbol to the *trishula,* the meaning of footprints representing the "traces" of the principle in the manifested world, the fire pillar as an "axial" symbol equivalent to that of the tree, the symbolism of the chariot and that of the throne, and so on. This brief overview will suffice, we believe, to show that the scope of this work far exceeds that of a study on Buddhism; the particular consideration of Buddhism, as the author states, is strictly speaking merely an "accident"; and it is indeed traditional symbolism, in its truly universal sense, that is primarily concerned. Let us add that these considerations are likely to significantly alter the "rationalist" idea that Westerners have of "primitive Buddhism," which perhaps was, on the contrary, less completely heterodox than some of its later derivatives; if there has been "degeneration" somewhere, would it not be precisely in the opposite direction to that assumed by the prejudices of orientalists and their natural "modern" sympathy for everything that asserts itself as anti-traditional?

• Jean Marquès-Rivière – *Buddhism in Tibet*

(Baudinière Publishers, Paris).

The first part of this work is an exposition of the fundamental ideas of Buddhism in general, and more particularly of *Mahayana Buddhism ;* the second deals with the special form taken by Tibetan Buddhism, or Lamaism. The author very rightly corrects certain erroneous ideas circulating in the West, especially concerning "Tantrism," and also with regard to "reincarnationist" interpretations; he also rejects the notion that *Mahayana* is a "corrupt Buddhism," which, he says, implies "a total misunderstanding of Eastern doctrines and their intrinsic value." His book is therefore certainly better, in many respects, than the usual "Orientalist" works; and we must mention, among the most interesting, the chapters devoted to meditation, the symbolism of the "wheel of life," and the "science of emptiness." However, all is not perfectly clear, and one sometimes even falls back into some common misconceptions: Buddhism is not "religious" in the Western sense of the word, and what it is about certainly has nothing to do with "mysticism"; this is precisely why there is an initiation and a method, obviously incompatible with any "mysticism," and whose nature and scope the author doesn't seem to grasp. Perhaps this is due in part precisely to this confusion, and also in part to the exaggeration of the importance

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of “phenomena” and “psychic development,” which are only secondary matters, although they do not presuppose solely “a very advanced knowledge of human physiology”; but, nevertheless, this lack of perspective is not enough to explain how one can go so far as to speak of a “completely mechanistic and materialistic conception” where the very notion of “matter” is absent, or to qualify as “purely human” what, on the contrary, essentially implies the intervention of “superhuman” elements; there is an ignorance of the true nature of “spiritual influences” which is quite astonishing! But the truth is that the assertions we have just cited are related to a set of “tendentious” reflections which, curiously, do not seem to form a cohesive whole with the rest of the work, for they are found almost invariably as if added at the end of the chapters, and some of which testify to “apologetic,” or even “missionary,” concerns of a rather low order; So, might we not legitimately wonder if this ignorance is not, to some extent, "deliberate"? In any case, it is most regrettable that a work which otherwise has very real merits is thus disfigured by the intrusion of a mindset that we prefer not to describe other than as one of the forms of Western "proselytism," although an even harsher term might be more appropriate…

- **Marcel Bulard –** ***The Scorpion, symbol of the Jewish people in religious art of the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries***

(E. de Boccard, Paris).

The author, starting with an examination of paintings in the Saint-Sébastien chapel in Lans-le-Villard, Savoy, gathered all the similar documents he could find and presents a very detailed study of them, accompanied by numerous reproductions. These are depictions of the scorpion, either on the banner carried by the personified Synagogue, or, more frequently, in the representation of certain scenes from the Passion; in the latter case, the banner with the scorpion is generally associated with banners bearing other emblems and especially the letters SPQR, clearly to indicate both the participation of the Jews and that of the Romans; rather curiously, and something that seems to have escaped the author, one might also note that these same letters, arranged in a different order (SQRP), phonetically evoke the very name of the scorpion. As for the interpretation of this symbol, the author, drawing on the "Bestiaries" as well as on the dramatic poetry of the late Middle Ages, shows that it primarily signifies falsehood and perfidy; he also observes, quite rightly, that, at the time in question, symbolism, previously "dogmatic," had become primarily "moral," which essentially means that it was very close to degenerating into mere "allegory," a direct and inevitable consequence of the weakening of the traditional spirit. In any case, we believe, however, that, at least originally, there must have been something else there as well, perhaps an allusion to the zodiac sign of Scorpio, to which the idea of death is attached; We can also note in this regard that, without such an allusion, the very passage in the Gospel where the scorpion is contrasted with the egg *(Saint Luke,* XI, 11–12) remains perfectly

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incomprehensible. Another interesting and enigmatic point is the attribution of common symbols, notably the scorpion and the basilisk, to the Synagogue and Dialectic; here, the explanations considered, such as the reputation for dialectical skill that the Jews had, seem to us truly insufficient to account for such an association; and we cannot help but think of a tradition according to which the works of Aristotle, considered the master of Dialectic, would contain a hidden meaning that can only be penetrated and applied by the Antichrist, who, moreover, is said to be of Jewish descent; does it not seem that there might be something to look for in this direction?

October 1936

- **Léon de Poncins – *The Mysterious Jewish International***

(Gabriel Beauchesne, Paris).

What we said here recently* , Regarding * *The Occult War* ,* of which Mr. Léon de Poncins is also one of the authors, the remarks concerning certain exaggerations regarding the role of Jews in the world, and the necessity of making certain distinctions, still apply to this new volume. There is certainly much truth in what is presented there concerning two "Internationals," one revolutionary and the other financial, which are undoubtedly much less opposed in reality than a superficial observer might believe; but is all this, which is moreover part of a much larger whole, truly under the direction of the Jews (it would be more accurate to say of certain Jews), or is it not in reality being used by "something" that transcends them? Furthermore, we believe there would be a very interesting study to be done on the reasons why the Jew, when he is unfaithful to his tradition, becomes more easily than others the instrument of the "influences" that preside over modern deviation; This would be, in a way, the reverse of the "mission of the Jews," and it might perhaps lead quite far... The author is quite right to speak of a "conspiracy of silence" regarding certain questions; but what if he happened to touch directly on things that are even more truly "mysterious," and to which, let us say in passing, "anti-Judeo-Masonic" publications are the first to be careful never to make the slightest allusion?

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* [July 1936.]

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• **Hiram – *J. -B. Willermoz and the Templar Rite at the O*** *(National* ***from Lyon***
Catholic Federation, Paris).

The content of this book had previously appeared as a series of articles in the *RISS ;* that gives you an idea of the spirit in which it was conceived…
Certainly, the documents published therein, the bulk of which consists of Willermoz's correspondence during the long and complicated negotiations that ultimately led to the establishment of the Rectified Scottish Directory of the Province of Auvergne, these documents, we say, still retain their historical interest in themselves; but what to say of the commentaries that have been deemed necessary to accompany them? Some of the implausibilities are so enormous that they become comical; this is certainly the case with the presentation of Willermoz and certain other figures (among whom the Lyon canons of that time are particularly maligned) as servants of the "cult of the devil" and people who conspired to bring about a "return to paganism"! We are certainly not among those who are inclined to deny "the intervention of the devil in the affairs of this world," quite the contrary; but let them look for it where it truly lies; It is true that it would be a little more difficult and dangerous than simply following the false leads that the said demon or some of his representatives deemed advantageous to send the more or less naive "researchers" on, precisely to prevent them from risking discovering the truth…

• **John Charpentier – *The Master of Secrets: A Masonic Conspiracy under Louis XVI***

(H.-G. Peyre, Paris).

This is not, as one might be tempted to believe, the famous "Affair of the Necklace," but a completely fictional story, in which a number of real characters do appear, but those who play the main roles are also purely imaginary. In short, as the subtitle quite clearly indicates, it is simply a kind of anti-Masonic novel, distinguished above all by the "anachronistic" nature of certain discourses: the language could be that of some Freemason politicians today, but it is certainly not that of 18th- century Freemasons! There is also a bizarre story of "initiated or speculative Templar subjects" *(sic),* who supposedly continued after the destruction of their Order, and whose leader is designated as the "Master of the Secret"; they are said to have broken all ties with the other surviving Templars, who, in turn, founded Freemasonry to pursue their revenge. The author (to whom we would point out a major error regarding the Templar symbolism of the number 11, which we discussed in *The Esotericism of Dante)* would probably be hard-pressed to justify all these assertions in any seriousness…

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• CR Jain – *Jain Psychology*

French translation by J. Salève. (Éditions Eugène Figuière, Paris).

The author of this small volume apparently intended to "adapt" certain teachings of Jainism to the framework of Western psychology; but the form is so clumsy and the expression so flawed that, quite often, one is unclear what he meant. Moreover, we cannot determine precisely the respective responsibilities of the author and the translator in this regard; in any case, it seems to us that the latter could at least have taken the trouble to avoid barbarisms and construct his sentences correctly!

• Hari Prasad Shastri – *Vedanta light, from Shri Dadaji Maharaj*

(The Shanti-Sadan Publishing Committee, London).

This booklet contains a translation of several interviews with the author's *guru* on various topics related to the teachings of *Vedanta,* particularly concerning the preparatory means of spiritual realization. The form is simple and the content quite elementary, but there is nothing here that could raise serious objections. We will only point out one assertion that seems somewhat questionable: how and in what sense can the origin of *Karma Yoga* be attributed to Zoroaster ?

• Rudolf Steiner – *The Emergence of the Natural Sciences*

(Association of Spiritual Science. Paris).

This volume, like those preceding it, represents the publication of a series of lectures, this time given in Dornach in 1922-1923, in which the "history of ideas" is treated in a manner quite peculiar to the author. It is certain that the development of modern science is closely linked to the formation of a certain mentality, very different from that of previous eras; but the true nature of the change that has thus occurred over the last few centuries is perhaps not precisely that described here, and the views concerning the ancients' mode of knowledge are a little too reminiscent of the fantasies of the "clairvoyants" to be readily taken seriously.

• Petre Deunov – *The Master Speaks*

(Jitno Zerno magazine editorial team, Sofia).

The words of this Bulgarian "Master" are, on the whole, deplorably banal; if we mention them, however, it is because they contain a description of an "August Universal Brotherhood" whose constitution bears a striking resemblance to that of the famous "Grand White Lodge"; stories of this kind are multiplying.

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definitely a bit too much lately for us to not see it as a truly worrying symptom!

November 1936

- **Enel – *The Origins of Genesis and the Teachings of the Temples of Ancient Egypt. Volume I, Parts 1 and 2***

(French Institute of Oriental Archaeology, Cairo).

It is certainly very difficult, and perhaps even quite impossible at present, to know what the ancient Egyptian tradition actually was.
Completely extinct for so many centuries; thus, the various interpretations and reconstructions attempted by Egyptologists are largely hypothetical, and moreover, often contradictory. The present work distinguishes itself from the usual Egyptological works by a commendable concern for doctrinal understanding, which is generally absent from them, and also by the great importance it rightly gives to symbolism, which the "officials," for their part, tend rather to deny or simply ignore; but does this mean that the views presented here are less hypothetical than others? We may be permitted to express some doubt about this, especially given that it is inspired by a kind of bias towards finding a constant parallel between Egyptian and Hebrew traditions. While it is certainly understood that the core is essentially the same everywhere, nothing proves that the two forms in question were truly so close to one another. The direct lineage that the author seems to assume between them, and which the title itself probably intends to suggest, is more than questionable. This results in more or less forced assimilations, and for example, we wonder whether it is truly certain that Egyptian doctrine considered universal manifestation under the aspect of "creation," which appears so exclusively specific to the Hebrew tradition and those related to it. The testimonies of the Ancients, who should have known better than we what to expect, do not indicate this at all. And on this point, our mistrust increases even further when we observe that the same principle is sometimes called the "Creator," sometimes simply the "Demiurge"; between these two obviously incompatible roles, a choice must be made… On the other hand, linguistic considerations would undoubtedly also warrant reservations, for it is clear that the language in which the Egyptian tradition was expressed is no more known to us than the tradition itself; and it must also be added that certain interpretations are clearly too influenced by occultist conceptions. Nevertheless, this does not mean that, in this volume, the first part of which is devoted to the Universe and the second to Man, there are not a considerable number of noteworthy remarks, some of which could even be confirmed by comparisons with Eastern traditions, which unfortunately the author seems to ignore almost entirely.

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completely, much better than through biblical references. We cannot, of course, go into detail; to give an example, we will only point out, in this line of thought, what concerns the constellation of the Thigh, the designation for the Great Bear, and the expression "Head of the Thigh" which applies to the Pole; there would be some curious parallels to be drawn on this subject. Finally, let us note the author's opinion on the Great Pyramid, in which he sees both a "solar temple" and a monument intended to "immortalize the knowledge of the laws of the Universe"; this supposition is at least as plausible as many others that have been made on this subject; but, as for saying that "the hidden symbolism of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures relates directly to the events that took place during the construction of the Great Pyramid," this is an assertion that seems to us to lack a little too much plausibility in every respect!

• Paul Brunton – *A Search in secret Egypt*

(Rider and Co, London).

The author, having previously published *A Search in Secret India,* which we reviewed at the time* , intended to write a similar book on Egypt; but we must frankly say that this new volume is considerably inferior to the other, and that the "journalistic" tendency we had already noted in certain parts of the former is much more regrettably accentuated. Like almost all foreigners, he has evidently been more interested in ancient Egypt than in modern Egypt; and, indeed, his contacts with the latter have not all been the most fortunate. Thus, one might be surprised by the space he devotes to the "phenomena" produced by the "fakir" Tahra Bey, too well known for his performances in the music halls of Europe and America; This is hardly in keeping with the book's title… There is also a chapter devoted to a "magician" who is not named, but whom we had no difficulty identifying, and who, despite his extraordinary pretensions *(Es-sâher min janbi' Llah…),* is in short nothing more than a rather skillful charlatan. In yet another chapter, there is mention of a hypnotist operating using the most vulgarly Western methods; he is, moreover, despite this, a genuinely Egyptian Israelite, although the author, in a rather amusing misunderstanding, mistook him for a Frenchman, even believing he recognized in him "the lively manner of speaking of his race"... according to the conventional idea the English have of it! What relates to snake charmers is perhaps more interesting, although these facts, in truth, are quite commonplace, and it is truly excessive to draw conclusions from them about the possible survival of a supposed "snake cult"... – If we turn to what concerns ancient Egypt, we cannot help but find that visions and dreams play a somewhat excessive role; this was not, however, necessary to have, for example, the idea of an antediluvian and "Atlantean" origin for the Sphinx and the

* [June 1935.]

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Pyramids, because it seems to us that such an idea has already been expressed in quite a few books. The author wanted to spend a night alone inside the Great Pyramid, and there too he had a vision relating to initiation; but, no doubt due to an effect of his previous studies, this took a form that is a little too reminiscent of the "astral projection" dear to occultists; that the Great Pyramid could in fact have been a place of initiation, we will certainly not contradict, especially since this hypothesis is at least more plausible than a number of others, which the author criticizes with a great deal of common sense (including, which is quite commendable for an Englishman, the "prophetic" theory which we will have to return to in connection with another book); But even if this were proven, we would still be no closer to understanding the specific modalities of Egyptian initiation, and the allusions of ancient authors are certainly far too insufficient for us to form any kind of precise idea of it. – At the end of the volume, the author recounts his encounter with an “Adept” (?), whose discourses on the dangers of certain excavations in ancient tombs are hardly “transcendent”; we certainly do not wish to doubt his good faith, but we wonder if he might not have simply been deceived.

- **G. Barbarin – *The Secret of the Great Pyramid or the End of Adamic world***

(Adyar Editions, Paris).

That there is a "secret" of the Great Pyramid—whether it was a place of initiation, as we mentioned earlier, or whether, through its orientation and proportions, it represents a kind of summary of certain traditional sciences, or even that both are true at the same time, for they are far from irreconcilable—is very probable, especially since certain traditions, more or less distorted but whose origins undoubtedly go back a very long way, seem to allude to it. But that modern scholars have rediscovered this "secret" seems much more doubtful. Much has been written on this subject, particularly regarding the measurements of the Pyramid; certain geometric, geodetic, and astronomical observations seem well-established and are certainly interesting, but they are, on the whole, quite fragmentary, and alongside them, there has also been a great deal of fanciful speculation. Besides, are we even sure we know exactly what unit of measurement the ancient Egyptians used? The author of this book begins by providing an overview of all this work, including the most bizarre hypotheses, such as the one that seeks to discover a map of the Nile's sources in the internal layout of the Pyramid, and the one that claims the "Book of the Dead" is nothing more than a description and explanation of this same layout. We cannot, moreover, agree with him when he says that the geometric and other knowledge evidenced there "is merely an expression of human science" and nothing more, for this proves that he is ignorant of the true nature of traditional sciences and that he confuses them with secular sciences… But let us leave that aside, for this is not, in short, the main subject of this volume: what is primarily concerned here, and which is of a nature

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Even more fantastical are the "prophecies" that have been sought by measuring, in a manner that is not entirely free of arbitrariness, the different parts of the corridors and chambers of the Pyramid, in order to correlate the numbers thus obtained with periods and dates in history. For quite some time now, an extraordinary propaganda campaign has been waged around this theory, especially in England, the intentions of which seem rather suspect and are not entirely disinterested; certain claims concerning the descendants of the "lost tribes of Israel" and other such matters, which the author glosses over rather quickly, are probably not entirely unrelated to it… In any case, there is an absurdity in all this that is so manifest that we are astonished that no one seems to notice it; Indeed, assuming that the builders of the Pyramid actually included "prophecies" in it, two things would be plausible: either these "prophecies," which must have been based on some knowledge of "cyclic laws," relate to the general history of the world and humanity, or they were adapted to concern Egypt more specifically; but it is neither one nor the other, since everything one wants to find there is reduced exclusively to the point of view of Judaism first and then Christianity, so that one would logically have to conclude from this that the Pyramid is not an Egyptian monument, but a "Judeo-Christian" monument! It should also be added that everything there is conceived according to a so-called biblical "chronology" conforming to the narrowest and, let's say it, the most Protestant "literalism"; And there are many other curious observations to be made: for example, since the beginning of the Christian era, no interesting date has been found to mark before… that of the first railways; one must believe that these ancient builders had a very modern perspective in their appreciation of the importance of events; this is the grotesque element which, as we say elsewhere, is never lacking in these sorts of things, and by which their true origin is betrayed…

Now, here is perhaps the most disturbing thing about this whole affair; the date of September 15-16, 1936 is indicated, with astonishing precision, as marking humanity's entry into a new era and the "advent of spiritual renewal"; in fact, it does not appear that anything particularly striking happened on that date, but what exactly could this mean?

The author mentions in this regard a number of more or less consistent predictions, most of which are also quite suspect, either in themselves or especially because of the use that those who spread them want to make of them; there are too many for it to be a simple "coincidence", but, for our part, we draw only one conclusion from this: that some people are currently seeking to create by this means a "state of mind" favorable to the imminent realization of "something" which falls within their designs; and, as one can easily suspect, we are certainly not among those who wish the success of this "pseudo-spiritual" undertaking!

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December 1936

- **Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya –**
  The Mirror of Gesture, being the Abhinaya Darpana of Nandikeshwara, translated into English, with introduction and illustrations

(E. Weyhe, New York).

This book is a translation of an ancient Hindu treatise on the art of theatre and dance (both are designated, in Sanskrit, by the same word , *nâtya) ;* it is, of course, a strictly traditional art, whose origin is traced back to Brahma himself and the beginning of the *Treta Yuga.* Everything in it has a precise meaning, and, consequently, nothing can be left to individual fancy; the gestures (especially the *mudras ,* or signs formed by the position of the hands) constitute a veritable hieratic language, which is also found throughout Hindu iconography. Therefore, this treatise should, in the intention of its translators, be considered above all as "an illustration of the general principles of an art of communication through gestures, and of all traditional and normal art." Moreover, "the modern division of life into watertight and independent compartments is a true aberration, and the traditional arts of a people are not a kind of outgrowth, but an integral part of their life." At the end of the volume are some very beautiful plates reproducing examples from sculpture and painting, as well as illustrations of a number of attitudes and *mudras,* which greatly facilitate understanding of the text.

- **Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and A. Graham Carey – *Patron and Artist, Pre-Renaissance and Modern***

(Wheaton College Press, Norton, Mass.).

This book is a combination of two lectures, the first of which Mr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy presents *The Normal View of Art,* that is, the traditional conception, as it existed up to the Renaissance, insofar as it opposes the abnormal conception of moderns. According to the traditional view, art essentially involves knowledge; far from being simply a matter of feeling, a work of art can only be truly "beautiful" if it is suited to its intended use, and, whatever its purpose may be, it is only under this condition that it can achieve perfection in its order; and the artist should not seek to be "original," but to be "true." We will quote, as particularly relevant to our point of view, this passage concerning craft initiations: "The object of all initiations is, through the transmission of a spiritual impulse, to stimulate in the individual the development of their own latent potential."

Initiatory teaching links the characteristic activity of the individual, manifested externally in his vocation, to a universal order, internally intelligible;

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The initiated craftsman works, no longer simply on the surface of things, but in conscious accord with a cosmic model that he strives to realize. Such teaching is based on vocation and at the same time reacts upon it, giving it a deeper meaning than that which can be attached to mere talent; vocation becomes the type of an activity having extensions and correspondences in all domains, not only material, but also intellectual, and even in God, who, insofar as His act is conceived as a creation *per artem,* is the exemplar of every human worker. In this way, tradition affirms that works of art are imitations, not of other things, but of forms conceived in the mind of the artist and which, in turn, must be, insofar as his powers permit, in the likeness of eternal reasons." – The subject of Mr. Graham Carey's lecture is *Liberty and Discipline in the Four Artistic Essentials ;* These four essential elements are the aim of the artistic activity, the material on which it is exercised, the tools or instruments it employs, and finally the idea or image to which it conforms (it may be noted that this corresponds to Aristotle's four "causes"). The author's thesis is that, according to the traditional conception, the artist was subject to strict rules regarding the first three points, but free with respect to the fourth, whereas, with regard to modern art, the situation has been exactly reversed. He examines in detail several attempts that seem likely to promote a return to the normal order; and, in conclusion, he insists that the artistic intention, stemming from the desire to give, is the opposite of the commercial intention, which stems from the desire to acquire, so that any "commercialization" is contrary to the very spirit of art.

• André Duboscq – *Unity of Asia*

(Unitas Publishing, Paris).

Although this little book is primarily political in nature, it contains an admission worth noting: the author, in fact, quite clearly acknowledges that "spirituality" resides in the East and is lacking in the contemporary Western world; it is true that he nonetheless persists in visibly aligning himself with this world devoid of spirituality, which is yet another example of the contradictions so common in the contemporary mentality! If, on the other hand, he finds "intellectuality" in Europe, thus seeming to want to oppose it to "spirituality," it is because he is truly quite undemanding regarding the quality of what he calls "intellectual"; when will we finally understand that true intellectuality has nothing in common with the base rationality applied to the pursuit of purely material ends? As for the assertion that "Asia is one," it seems to us somewhat exaggerated; What is true is that the various Eastern civilizations are comparable to each other by the presence of principles of a spiritual order, whereas there is nothing of the sort in the case of modern Western civilization; but, from there to a unity achieved in fact and capable of manifesting itself even in the most external domains, such as that of politics, there is quite a long way to go…

Wanting to include Russia in the so-called "unity of Asia" is even more

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Contrary to all reality, for here we find nothing of Eastern spirituality; and we are astonished that anyone could even consider relying, to support such a thesis, on the pronouncements of a certain "Eurasian party" that no one, not even among the Russians, has ever taken seriously. It is true that, moreover, the author also accepts at face value the overly "self-serving" assertions of some Japanese writers, not to mention those of "defenders of the West" such as Mr. Henri Massis; all this is not entirely coherent and does not demonstrate sound judgment.
The criticisms leveled at the clumsy way in which the League of Nations intervened in certain Eastern conflicts are apparently more justified (and even then, is it really just a matter of simple clumsiness?); but this would lead us onto ground that is no longer ours at all…

Sir **Charles Marston – *The Bible Told the Truth. French version of Luce***

Clarence. (Plon Bookstore, Paris).

This book contains, above all, if I may put it this way, an excellent critique of biblical "criticism," perfectly highlighting all that is biased in its methods and erroneous in its conclusions. It seems, moreover, that the position of this "criticism," which considered itself so self-assured, is now seriously compromised in the eyes of many, for all recent archaeological discoveries only serve to refute it; perhaps this is the first time that such discoveries have finally served a purpose whose scope transcends mere scholarship… It goes without saying, of course, that those who truly understand tradition have never had any need for this kind of proof; but it must be acknowledged that, based on facts that are, in a sense, "material" and tangible, they are particularly suited to resonate with the modern mind, which is sensitive only to things of this nature. We should especially note that the results obtained directly contradict all "evolutionary" theories, and that they show "monotheism" at its very origins, and not as the culmination of a long development from a so-called primitive "animism." Another interesting point is the proof of the existence of alphabetic writing in the time of Moses and even before; and texts almost contemporary with him describe rites similar to those of the Pentateuch, which the "critics" claimed were of "late" origin; finally, many historical facts reported in the Bible, whose authenticity was contested, are now fully confirmed. Of course, there are still, alongside this, many points that are more or less doubtful; And what we fear is that we might want to go too far in the direction of a narrow and exclusive "literalism" which, whatever one may say, has absolutely nothing traditional about it in the true sense of the word.

It is debatable whether one can speak of "biblical chronology" when going back beyond Moses; the time of Abraham could be earlier than is supposed; and, as for the Flood, the date assigned to it would force us to reduce its importance to that of a local and very minor catastrophe, comparable to the floods of Deucalion and Ogyges. The same would be necessary when it comes to origins.

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Humanity should be wary of the obsession with the Caucasus and Mesopotamia, which, likewise, has nothing to do with tradition and arose solely from interpretations formulated when certain things were no longer understood in their true sense. We can hardly dwell here on certain more specific points; however, let us point out this: how, while acknowledging that "Melchizedek has been considered a very mysterious figure" throughout tradition, can one simply try to make him the king of some small town, which, moreover, was not called Salem, but Jebus? And furthermore, if one wishes to locate the land of Midian beyond the Gulf of Aqaba, what do we make of the tradition according to which the site of the Burning Bush is in the crypt of Saint Catherine's Monastery, at the very foot of Sinai? But, of course, all this in no way diminishes the value of the truly important discoveries, which will undoubtedly continue to multiply, especially since their beginning dates back only about ten years; and we can only recommend the reading of this clear and conscientious exposition to all those who wish to find arguments against destructive and anti-traditional "criticism." We are only obliged, in conclusion, to issue a "warning" on another point: the author seems to rely on modern "metapsychics" to explain, or at least to make acceptable, miracles, the gift of prophecy, and in general, relationships with what he rather unfortunately calls the "Invisible" (a word that occultists of all kinds have used and abused far too much); he is not alone in this, and we have recently observed other examples of a similar tendency. This is a regrettable illusion, and the danger is even greater on this side because we are less aware of it; we should not forget that "diabolical tricks" take all forms, depending on the circumstances, and demonstrate almost inexhaustible resources!

- **Gabriel Trarieux d'Egmont – *The Thyrsus and the Cross***

(Adyar Editions, Paris).

Here we find again the astonishing confidence in theosophical and occult "sources" that we noted some time ago in another work by the same author* ; this time, there are also "Rosicrucian" teachings attributed to an anonymous "guide" who strikes us as quite suspect, for the reasons we explain elsewhere concerning modern "pseudo-Rosicrucianism." The result of all this, particularly with regard to the "Mystery of Christ," is something that naturally closely resembles the "messianic" theories of the theosophists, but is further aggravated by the mixture of the other elements we have just mentioned; certain passages give a truly disturbing impression… As for the history of Christian esotericism, as presented here, it tends to constantly conflate this

* *[Prometheus or the Mystery of Man* (April 1936).]

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Esotericism is often conflated with "heresy" and "sects"; we have frequently sought to dispel this confusion, so we need not reiterate all the errors inherent in such a perspective. Of course, when we turn to the present day, we again encounter the interventions of the "Great White Lodge," the advent of the "Age of Aquarius," and other matters all too familiar to us. Therefore, when the author speaks of "the dark powers that guide us and their perceptive methods," one can only sincerely express regret that he is so far from demonstrating equal perspicacity and discerning their influence wherever it is truly at work! – We do not wish to point out certain errors in references, but there is one which affects us a little too closely for us to remain silent on: Bishop RH Benson wrote a book entitled: *The Master of the World,* and not *The King of the World;* as moreover, it is the Antichrist that is being discussed there, and as what we talk about in our own book on *The King of the World* is of a completely opposite nature, such a mistake is extremely unfortunate; until now, only the people of the *RISS* had been found to confuse, much less unintentionally, the “King of the World” with the “Prince of this World”!

- **Alfred Sage – *A Science of Order is hidden in the World Numbers***

(Émile Nourry Bookstore, Paris).

The author stated his intention to present "a new science, very simple and very useful," and certainly, the notion of order is sorely lacking in our time, in all fields; but, in fact, we find in his book primarily considerations based on ordinary arithmetic, some almost childish, others complicated by unfamiliar terminology, and some even questionable, involving certain misunderstandings about the nature of the correspondence that exists between arithmetic and geometry. It is true that "quantity is much more general than number," but this is because the latter is in reality only one of its modes, whereas the author seems to understand it quite differently. There are also some rather strange views on "the Absolute that posits itself in relation to the relative," and which is defined as "the Unity of Order and Life in itself"; this certainly has nothing to do with the metaphysical Absolute; Let's say it's philosophy, which allows one to say pretty much anything one wants… What's even more astonishing is that one can write an entire volume on order without once uttering the word "hierarchy"; is this a deliberate choice or simply a lapse in judgment? In any case, although the author suggests a few applications, notably to music and chemistry (and, speaking of music, he curiously transforms the "mixed mode" into the "mystic mode," which comes across as a rather poor pun), nothing truly clear or satisfying emerges from all this, and we can't help but think that something else entirely would be needed to actually bring some order to the minds of our contemporaries…

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January 1937

• Francis Warrain – *The Philosophical Works of Hoene Wronski: Texts, Commentaries and Criticism; Volume II: Architectonics of The Universe*

(Véga Bookstore, Paris).

This second volume, conceived using the same method as the first, which we reviewed previously, contains material relating to Wronski's famous "Law of Creation" and its applications to numerous "systems of reality," which he derives from what he calls the "Prototype of the Universe." All this, in short, only confirms what we have already said: it is impossible to see anything here other than a philosophy, and even a particularly "systematic" one, with all the limitations that this implies; it is a very ingenious construction, certainly, but even more artificial; the Universe cannot be reduced to diagrams and charts in this way! If further proof were needed that Wronski is not an esotericist, we would find it in what he says about the symbolism of numbers, whose value he considers only from a very limited point of view, and which he simply attributes to a "vague premonition" that the ancients supposedly had of his own "Law of Creation"; under these conditions, any comparison that can be made between his theories and the traditional conceptions of Kabbalah and Pythagoreanism seems to us to be very poorly founded… It is true that, on the other hand, Wronski himself makes room for principles that he calls "esoteric," and which he leaves undesignated; but, whatever interpretation one may try to give them, it is quite clear that this is only a "manner of speaking" that has nothing to do with the notion of a true esotericism understood traditionally.

Without going into further details which would take us too far afield, we will only point out the curious way in which Wronski claims to "construct" the history of humanity; these are individual views of the kind of those of Hegel and some other German philosophers, and one would be hard-pressed to discover in them the slightest trace of a knowledge of the true "cyclic laws" or of any other authentically traditional data.

• Firmin Ladet – *Meditations on Omnitude*

(J. Vrin Philosophical Bookstore, Paris).

Whatever one might say, we do not believe there is ever any advantage in resorting to typographical peculiarities, nor to bizarre or unusual terminology; this, in our opinion, is one of the principal flaws of this large work, and it has another that is no less unfortunate: it is in reality composed only of a series of maxims and reflections which, from beginning to end, follow one another without any division, without any classification according to the subjects to which they relate; how would it be possible to find one's way through all of this? Yet there is, on

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Being, Unity, Identity, etc., are very interesting thoughts, often inspired by Neoplatonism, sometimes even by Hindu doctrines; there are also some which, bringing us back without transition to the most contingent domains, strangely "clash" with these; and there are still others which are based only on verbal comparisons, sometimes quite questionable, not to mention those whose meaning we must frankly admit completely escapes us… If the author could group what is truly essential in his "meditations" into a few chapters, expressing it in a clearer and less complicated form, and also eliminating the excessive "repetitions," we are sure that his readers would be greatly grateful!

• GP Scarlata – *Il trattato sur l'volgare di Dante*

(Stabilimento grafico "Carnia", Tolmezzo).

In this pamphlet (extracted from the *Rivista Letteraria),* the author of the book *Le origini della letteratura italiana nel pensiero di Dante,* to which we previously devoted an article here (July 1932 issue), revisits the significance that should be attributed to Dante's treatise *De vulgari eloquio* (or *De vulgaris eloquentiae doctrina) ,* considered primarily in its relation to the poetry of the "Faithful of Love." He agrees with us when we say that they were never either a "sect" or a "society"; but he does not seem to have fully grasped their true nature, since, while viewing the treatise in question as a "commentary" on their poetry, he sees in it not an initiatory content, but only a historical and political one. In truth, there is no incompatibility here, if one considers that, in Dante's time, history and politics were still something quite different from what they have become in the purely secular conceptions of the modern world; and, if the *illustrious vernacular* is truly "writing with four senses," why stop at the most external senses? That Dante, here as in his other works, had in mind as complete a realization as possible of the traditional social organization of Christendom is beyond doubt, but this itself may ultimately be for him only an application of certain initiatory knowledge; and, moreover, this most certainly excludes him from being considered a "precursor of humanism" destructive of tradition.

• Rudolf Steiner – *The Gospel of Saint Luke*

(Association of Spiritual Science, Paris).

These lectures were given in 1909 in Basel, before the members of the Society Theosophical, from which the author had not yet separated himself at that time; and the interpretations they present are perhaps even more fantastical, if it is

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[*] *[New insights into Dante's secret language,* collected in the appendix to *The Esotericism of Dante.]*

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It is possible that these are not the ones that are "officially" current among the common run of Theosophists. It seems that when the evangelist speaks of "eyewitnesses," it should be translated as "clairvoyants"; from there, one only has to consult the "Akasha Chronicle," and what one finds there is certainly not trivial! Thus, one discovers that it was the "transfigured Buddha" who appeared to the shepherds in the form of a "heavenly army," then that there were simultaneously two children Jesus, one from Nazareth and the other from Bethlehem, in whom Adam and Zoroaster were first reincarnated respectively, pending other transformations… We believe it unnecessary to pursue this more than complicated story any further; truly, if one deliberately intended to muddy the waters to make the origins of Christianity a kind of incomprehensible mess, it would be difficult to do better; And, even if such an intention did not consciously preside over the elaboration of all these fables, the impression that emerges from them is no less distressing, and the peremptory way in which they are asserted as "facts" adds to this; we would at least like to believe, for the sake of the author's memory, that he played in all this only a simple role of "suggestion"!

• D. Duvillé – *Eastern Ethiopia or Atlantis, initiator of ancient peoples, followed by “Birth and spread of the alphabet”*

(French Society of Literary and Technical Publishers, Paris).

The author distinguishes between two Ethiopias, one western, which is none other than Atlantis (to which some also gave this name), and the other eastern, which is the one generally known as such. But, despite the title, he seems to have had the former in mind rather than the latter, for he has essentially only gathered what appeared to him to be traces of Atlantean influence among various ancient peoples. There are some rather disparate elements here, drawn from sources of very unequal quality; but what is most regrettable is the astonishing linguistic ignorance the author displays at every turn. It is difficult to accept the constant distortion of certain names, such as *Orzmund* for *Ormuzd ,* as mere printing errors ; and what can be said of assertions based solely on the imperfections of Latin transcriptions? *Sepher* (with a *samek)* certainly cannot come from *Sephora* (with a *tsade),* any more than *Reshit,* where *sch* represents only a single letter, can be "the anagram of *Christ* "... Let's not insist further; it would nevertheless be a shame to forget "the *Sandherim,* composed of 70 translators" who "approved the translation"

Greek of the *Sefer,* which, moreover, is supposed to have originally been written in "the Aramaic of the Targums"! The final chapter on the alphabet also contains many other things of the same strength; lovers of philological curiosities who read this book would be truly ungrateful not to declare themselves satisfied.

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- **C. Kerneïz – *Hatha Yoga or the art of living according to India mysterious***

(Jules Tallandier Publishers, Paris).

This book is more "sensible" than most Western publications that claim to deal with the same subject: it contains very accurate reflections on the pointless hustle and bustle of modern life; the exercises it suggests are among those that, at the very least, present no serious danger, and, on matters such as diet, it demonstrates a moderation that happily contrasts with certain Anglo-Saxon excesses… But all this is not *Hatha Yoga ;* it is, if you will, something that draws inspiration from its methods to a certain extent, but applies them to entirely different ends. *Hatha Yoga,* in fact, is not at all an "art of living"; It is one of the methods of preparation for true *Yoga,* that is, for metaphysical realization, and, while it may produce certain physiological effects, it does not focus on them any more than it aims, as others have imagined, to provoke the development of psychic "powers"; all of this is merely "accidents" in the truest sense of the word. This means that it cannot in any way be considered a kind of "therapy"; and, moreover, the best proof of this is that one of the conditions rigorously required of those who wish to undertake its practice is to be in perfect health.

We also note here, in this regard, a misunderstanding about the very meaning of the word *hatha :* it does indeed mean "strength," but in the sense of "effort" and even "violence," in a sense comparable to that of the Gospel saying: "The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the violent"; and it contains many other things as well, because, symbolically, *ha* is the Sun and *tha* is the Moon, with all their correspondences; we are certainly far removed from physiology, hygiene, and therapeutics… And it is yet another error to think that *Hatha Yoga,* as it truly is, can be addressed to those who are not attached in any way to the Hindu tradition; there, as in everything that does not remain at the level of simple theory, there is a question of regular transmission that plays an essential role. Of course, this question does not arise when, as is the case here, the goals are entirely foreign to traditional knowledge, but, once again, it is no longer *Hatha-Yoga* that is being discussed then, and we should not be under any illusions about this; we do not want to insist on it further, but it seemed to us that these few clarifications would not be useless to set things straight.

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February 1937

- **P. Saintyves – *Magical Stones: Baetyls, Axe-Amulets and Lightning Stones; Scholarly and Folk Traditions***

(Émile Nourry Bookstore, Paris).

The title of this book first calls for an observation: in reality, there are neither "scholarly traditions" nor "popular traditions"; but traditional data can be preserved and transmitted by both the people and scholars, which ultimately makes little difference, except that they are more likely to be altered by scholars, because the latter always have a greater or lesser tendency to mix in their own interpretations. Among modern people especially, the mania for seeking "rational explanations" for everything, which, in this respect at least, are almost always false, is far more troublesome than simple "popular" incomprehension; One could find a few examples in this very work, but, in general, the author has confined himself to collecting and reporting texts and facts, which is certainly much better, for he thus provides documentation from which those who see in this something other than a collection of meaningless "superstitions" can make use. We find first a series of extracts from various authors, from antiquity to the 19th century, relating to the subject studied; but the greater part of the volume is devoted to traditions that still persist in our time, first in the various regions of France, and then in other countries. "Baetyls," which we have mentioned on several occasions, are discussed very little in all this, and the few quotations that allude to them do not clearly indicate what they are; if they are meteorites, it is only through confusion that they have been associated with "thunderstones." and the enumeration of the different kinds of "thunderstones"

This shows that many other confusions have occurred, but which, in short, all stem from the same initial error of interpretation: that of seeing in them, instead of stones symbolizing lightning, stones that fell from the sky with it, as we explained in an article we once devoted to this very subject here* (May 1929 issue). The true "lightning stones," and those to which the majority of the collected facts nevertheless relate, are prehistoric axes; to these must be added stone arrowheads and certain arrow-shaped fossils (belemnites), which are only a variant of the same symbolism; on this point, we refer to what we recently wrote on the question of symbolic weapons** (October 1936 issue). We will also point out a special case, that in which precious stones or natural crystals are considered "lightning stones"; It does indeed deserve to be considered separately, as it may have some connection to the double meaning of the word *vajra* as "lightning" and "diamond," and so this would be relevant here.

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* *[Thunderstones.]*
** *[Symbolic weapons.]*

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of a different symbolism. To return to prehistoric weapons, it is certainly not enough to say, as the author does, that they were regarded as "thunderstones" because their real origin and use had been forgotten, because, if that were all there was to it, they could just as easily have given rise to a host of other suppositions;
but, in fact, in every country without exception, they are always "thunderstones" and never anything else; the symbolic reason is obvious, while the "rational explanation" is disconcertingly childish!

April 1937

- **Dr de Fontbrune – *The Prophecies of Nostradamus Revealed: Letter to Henry II***

(Adyar Editions, Paris).

Yet another all-too-common misuse of language in our time: any "predictions," whatever their value, are not "prophecies," for they cannot in any way be equated with sacred and traditional scriptures. There is, at the very least, a strange impropriety here, of which our contemporaries seem unaware, although they sometimes take it to extremes. For example, we recently saw an astrologer dedicate a book to Nostradamus, "the greatest of the prophets the world has ever known." We want to believe that the implications of the words he uses escape him, for otherwise it would be even more serious. And what gives the matter a certain ironic flavor is that Nostradamus showed the utmost contempt for the astrologers of his time: *"All astrologers, fools, and barbarians are despised ."* What would he say of those of today, even more profane and degenerate?

It is also Nostradamus, precisely, who is the subject of the work we are discussing here: the author believes he has found in his *Epistle to Henry II* the indication of the sequence of events which must occur as the "end of times" approaches, and which, according to his interpretation, would take place during the present century itself.
Unfortunately, we recall that Mr. Pierre Piobb, for his part, saw in the same Nostradamus the prediction of events relating to a much more distant future, such as, for example, the destruction of Paris in the 34th century; there is no shortage of interpreters, but they would do well to reach some agreement among themselves! Moreover, it must be acknowledged that the texts are indeed very obscure, and this obscurity is clearly intentional, not only with regard to chronology, but also with regard to the language itself; and, concerning the one reproduced and studied by Dr. de Fontbrune, we must say that the accuracy of his translation is quite often questionable. It even contains curious linguistic and other errors: thus, to take a few examples, the "avites" are the ancestors and not the augurs (p. 35); "ligne" comes from *linea* and has no etymological link with *limen* (p. 47); A "myrmidon" is something quite different from a "mirmilion" (p. 49); "Gog and Magog," strangely transformed into "Gog, King of Magog," have nothing in common with the race

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yellow (p. 51), for the simple reason that they are not a people currently existing on the face of the earth; the "city of Achem" is very likely a holy city other than Jerusalem (pp. 62 and 65), etc. Let us simply add, in this vein, that the "brazen tripod" of which Nostradamus speaks must be related to some magical operations, but certainly has nothing to do with the practices
Spiritualists (p. 35); and, let us say in this regard, there is no doubt that Nostradamus had a very real knowledge of certain traditional sciences, although, apparently, these were not of a very high order; this point could, moreover, be clarified by various comparisons to which we may return on another occasion. For the moment, we must limit ourselves to the content of Dr. de Fontbrune's book: he seeks to confirm his interpretation concerning the coming "end of times" by a concordance with other predictions; apart from a few inevitable allusions to those of the "Great Pyramid," on which we have already recently explained ourselves, he refers above all to the so-called "prophecy" of Saint Malachy, the authenticity of which is, in truth, quite doubtful. All things of this kind, moreover, should be considered in principle as highly suspect: if their very source is often so, the use made of them and the interpretations added to them are even more so; given the unsettling way in which they are disseminated on all sides today, one cannot be too quick to warn those who are tempted to place excessive trust in them or to be unduly impressed by them. Even if there are sometimes fragments of truth to be found in all this, the particular perspective of the "seers" has inevitably subjected them to considerable distortions; moreover, most of these predictions are so confused and vague that one can find just about anything one wants in them… as one also finds in Nostradamus, whose work, despite having a "scientific" character that the others are far from possessing, is certainly no easier to understand for it!

- **Maurice Favone – *Hiram's Disciples in the Provinces: Freemasonry in the Marche***

(Dorbon Aîné, Paris).

This small volume is primarily of interest in itself as a piece of "local history," and many more "monographs" of this kind would certainly be needed to draw general conclusions; however, some ideas expressed in the introduction have implications that extend beyond this limited scope. First, concerning the origins of Freemasonry, the fact that the inhabitants of the Marche region "distinguished themselves in the art of building from the earliest times" does not seem to us, whatever is said here, to have a very direct connection with the development of "speculative" Freemasonry in this region; the author seems to forget that the latter was imported from England, and that what in France represented the old "operative" Freemasonry always continued within the guilds, especially those of stonemasons, and not elsewhere. Another, much more accurate view concerns the role of Freemasonry in the 18th century: his research convinced him that it in no way prepared the

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Revolution, contrary to the legend first propagated by anti-Masons, then by some Masons themselves; however, this is no reason to conclude that "the Revolution is the work of the people," which is utterly implausible; it certainly did not happen on its own, although what brought it about was not Freemasonry, and we do not even understand how anyone with the slightest reflection could possibly believe the "democratic" deception of spontaneous revolutions… Finally, we cannot avoid pointing out certain rather peculiar inaccuracies: for example, the author does not seem to realize that a Lodge and a Chapter are two completely different things; and we also point out to him that the "Adoption Lodges" which currently depend on the Grand Lodge of France are not in the least "under the sign of Le Droit Humain."

- **D r R. Swinburne Clymer –** ***The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America, Vol. I***

("The Rosicrucian Foundation," Quakertown, Pennsylvania).

This large volume is formed from several booklets that appear to have been initially published separately: some relate to the history of "Rosicrucian" or so-called Rosicrucian organizations in America; others provide a typical example of the disputes that sometimes arise between these organizations, which we alluded to in a recent article. One might also wonder why the author limits himself to denouncing only one rival organization, the one known as AMORC, when there are certainly more than a dozen others that he must logically consider just as "illegitimate," since they similarly use a title of which he claims a monopoly. Could it be because the "competition" is complicated, in this case, by the fact that both adversaries claim to be establishing, under their auspices, a "Universal Federation of Initiatic Orders and Societies," which obviously makes one too many? In any case, it is difficult to understand how associations that call themselves initiatory can be *registered* or *incorporated,* and bring their disputes before secular courts, nor how certificates issued by state administrations can establish anything other than a simple "priority" in the public use of a name, which certainly has nothing to do with proof of its legitimacy; all this testifies to a rather strange mentality, and in any case quite "modern"... But, that said, it is certainly not to give credence to Dr. Clymer's own claims to recognize that he provides very edifying documentation on the "plagiarisms" of his opponent, notably by showing that his so-called "secret teachings" are extracted verbatim from published and well-known books, such as those of Franz Hartmann and Eckartshausen. Regarding the latter, there is something rather amusing: the author states that he "conducted careful research, but could not find any writer, recognized as an authority or not, who cites or classifies Eckartshausen as a Rosicrucian"; we gladly point out to him the "source" that eluded him: it is in Sédir's *History of the Rosicrucians* that, among biographical notices on various figures presumed to be "Rosicrucians," he

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There is one, the last in the series, which is devoted to Eckartshausen (1st edition, pp. 169-160; 2nd edition, p. 359); here again, *the Imperator* of AMORC does not even have the merit of invention! Moreover, one could, provided one is aware of certain things, point out other "plagiarisms" of a somewhat different kind to him: thus, we see the reproduction of a diploma whose heading is inscribed in the name of a so-called "Grand College of Rites"; however, this title has never properly belonged to anyone but the Grand Orient of France; Knowing full well the circumstances under which *the Emperor* became aware of it, and noting that the date of the diploma in question is later than his, the "borrowing" cannot be in the slightest doubt for us, not to mention the details, very significant in this regard, of a seal more or less skillfully altered… There are, however, things of a more purely fanciful nature, such as the diploma of a non-existent "Rosicrucian Order of Egypt," although, to tell the truth, the "Libyan chain" with which it is encircled seems to us to be inspired by some pre-existing model; but, in this regard, why Dr. Would Clymer want us to say *"Rose-Cross"* and not *"Rose-Croix"* in an inscription written in (admittedly approximate) French ? It's true that we can't expect great linguistic knowledge from someone who writes the titles of his own organization in a Latin that we believe it more charitable not to reproduce!

Let us move on to something more important: it appears that *the Imperator* initially fabricated his AMORC from scratch, despite the fantastic story of a charter he supposedly received in Toulouse in 1915, the alleged signatory of which has never been discovered; but, subsequently, he came into contact with the numerous organizations led by the famous Aleister Crowley, of whom he became, in a way, one of the lieutenants; this clearly shows that, from "pseudo-initiation" to "counter-initiation," the transition is often all too easy… It is certainly not "defaming" Crowley to call him a "black magician," since, in fact, this quality was recognized, so to speak, "officially" by a judgment rendered against him in London a few years ago; let us say, however, in all impartiality, that this accusation would benefit from being supported by more solid arguments than those invoked by Dr. Clymer , who even demonstrates here a rather astonishing ignorance of symbolism. We have often pointed out that the same symbols can be taken in opposite senses: what matters in such cases is the intention with which they are used and the interpretation given to them, but it is obvious that this cannot be recognized by their outward appearance, which undergoes no change; and it is even a basic skill, on the part of a "black magician," to take advantage of such an ambiguity. Moreover, we must also take into account the pure and simple "plagiarisms," which are also not lacking in Crowley: thus, his emblem of the dove of the Grail comes directly from Péladan… What is particularly curious in Dr. Clymer is what we might call the obsession with the inverted triangle: he does not seem to suspect that this has, in the most orthodox symbolism, important meanings that we may perhaps expound one day; And how can he not at least know that this triangle appears in the higher degrees of Scottish Rite Freemasonry, where there is certainly no trace of "black magic"? A problem we admit we are unable to solve is...

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The question is how a cord worn "en sautoir" (across the neck) could possibly not have its point downwards; but we do not believe that, before Dr. Clymer , anyone ever had the idea of seeing in the shape of such a cord (or a canon's camail, if you will) the figure of an inverted triangle. Nor are there any great consequences to be drawn, except as an example of "forgery," from the fact that the heads of pseudo-Masonic organizations precede their signature with a triple cross solely to imitate the members of authentic Supreme Councils; this has nothing to do with a "symbol of the Antichrist"! Crowley, and *the Imperator* after him, use a cross overloaded with various signs; but, upon careful examination, one discovers in it, in short, only Hebrew letters, alchemical and astrological symbols, all things which have nothing original or characteristic about them; And, since among these signs are those of the four elements, how could there not be inverted triangles? There is also a supposed "black rooster" whose appearance, at first glance, may give a more "sinister" impression; but this too is simply... a fairly faithful reproduction of one of those bizarre composite figures called "grills" by archaeologists, and whose origin is attributed, rightly or wrongly, to the Basilidian Gnostics; let us specify that the "grill" in question was published in the collection of Rossi and Maffai, *Gemme antiche,* Volume 1, No. 21, and reproduced in Matter *'s Critical History of Gnosticism ,* plate 1 f, fig. 2 b. All this proves only one thing: that one should always be quite sure of knowing exactly what one is talking about, and that it is unwise to let oneself be carried away by one's imagination; But that's enough about all these "curiosities"... As for certain more or less charlatan-like "advertising" methods denounced by Dr.

Clymer, it goes without saying that we are entirely of his opinion on this; however, does he himself remember, although it dates back about a quarter of a century, a small magazine entitled *The Egyptian,* in which one could read advertisements whose style did not differ very noticeably from this one?

On the "historical" side of the book, we will dwell much less at length, for the moment at least; we will only note, first of all, that the *Militia Crucifera Evangelica,* which is one of the "origins" that Clymer claims as his own, was a specifically Lutheran D[r] organization, not Rosicrucian or initiatory; it is also doubtful that its recent American "reconstitution" can claim an authentic lineage, because, between 1598 and 1901 there is a gap that seems quite difficult to fill… There is also, among the "authorities" invoked, Georges Lippard, a little-known author of certain fictions with almost exclusively political and social tendencies, some chapters of which are reproduced here, and in which are staged supposed Rosicrucians of whom all that can be said is that they appear much less as initiates than as simple conspirators; And yet, this is ultimately the crux of the entire story of the Order's introduction to America in the 18th century; without wanting to be overly critical, one could certainly wish for better! As a more certain "connection," the only remaining link after this is the ties uniting Dr. Clymer and his organization to PL.

Randolph and his successors; can this very thing, especially from a Rosicrucian point of view, since that is what is at issue, be considered as constituting a sufficient and truly valid guarantee? We will not answer this question here.

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This question, although our readers can easily guess what we really think about it; we will only mention, in conclusion, a chapter devoted to Randolph's relations with some of his contemporaries (let us note in passing a rather singular error: the work of our director Paul Chacornac on Éliphas Lévi is attributed there to… Paul Redonnel), and, as this story is not entirely devoid of some interest, we may return to it another time.

May 1937

• Christopher Dawson – *Progress and Religion: An Investigation historical*

Translation by Pierre Belperron; preface by Daniel-Rops (Librairie Plon, Paris).

The spirit in which this work was written is obviously "traditionalist," but it cannot be said to be truly traditional; one can even see in it a rather clear illustration of the distinction we have drawn between these two terms. The author believes that every true civilization must have a religious foundation; in this, it is clear that he is extending the meaning of the word "religion" excessively, making it a synonym for "tradition" in general. Certainly, when he recommends a "return to tradition" for the Western world, he is not wrong to think that tradition here must be religious in nature, and to envision something that would be, in a certain sense, like a restoration of the "Christendom" of the Middle Ages. It seems that what, in his view, has been the main weakness of Western civilization is the duality of its elements, one Judeo-Christian and the other Greco-Latin, from which its religion and science respectively proceed. Their fusion would never have succeeded except imperfectly, and their dissociation would have led to the "secularization" characteristic of the modern era; there may be some truth in this, but we do not believe that such a view gets to the heart of the matter, and besides, the two elements in question cannot be placed on the same level. There is something more serious: the author recounts the history of the idea of progress in such a way that one would logically expect him to conclude its condemnation; but, quite the contrary, after showing that the "rationalists" wanted to oppose and substitute for Christianity a kind of "religion of progress," he nonetheless considers that this idea has its place within Christianity itself, and, as such, he would like to save it from the disrepute into which it risks falling, and preserve it in the "return to tradition" as he conceives it. He even goes so far, curiously enough, as to assert an "antinomy" between Christianity and the "theory of cosmic cycles," which he simply confuses with its philosophical and secular caricature, the theory of so-called "eternal return," which has always been utterly foreign to any genuinely traditional doctrine. Returning to the so-called "religion of progress," it should really be called a "pseudo-religion," or even a "counter-religion"; if it is true that its promoters have

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using certain elements of Christian origin, it is only by distorting them to the point of complete "subversion"; and one should also be very careful that "religious sentiment" is something quite different from religion, since it can even be turned directly against it. What must be clearly maintained is that the idea of progress is anti-traditional in itself, that it was even invented and propagated for this very reason, and that thus, as long as it has not been renounced, as well as all other specifically modern ideas or pseudo-ideas, one will not have the right to speak of an effective return to the traditional spirit. – Another weakness of this book is this: it shows that "anthropology" is not a true science, but a simple interpretation based on a whole set of preconceived ideas, mainly "evolutionary" and even "transformist"; But, after this, the author nonetheless makes extensive borrowings from this same "anthropology" to sketch out what he considers to be the successive developments of "religion," this term still indiscriminately encompassing everything with a traditional character, or everything that implies the presence of a "spiritual element," the notion of which remains extremely vague. While rightly criticizing certain common theories about "primitives," he cannot help but portray them as rather "simplistic" minds; he takes all changes in form for "progress of thought," and even regards the knowledge of transcendent principles as a result of "discoveries" made at one time or another, so that rites and symbols would initially have had no metaphysical significance, and that this would only have been attributed to them more or less late; Are these not also purely "evolutionary" conceptions, and what becomes of the very idea of tradition in all this, which has nothing to do with this "progressive" elaboration of a purely human "thought"? In short, a work like this is primarily interesting as a "symptom" of a state of mind that seems to be spreading more and more today; it clearly shows that some may have the best "traditionalist" intentions, and yet remain more or less completely under the influence of modern ideas, that is to say, fundamentally anti-traditional ones; practically speaking, only compromises can emerge from this, the "constructive" value of which seems rather dubious to us.

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June 1937

• Graham Carey – *The Majority Report on Art*

(John Stevens, Newport, Rhode Island)

This brochure reproduces a lecture given at the *Fogg Museum of Art.* From Harvard University, the author revisits and expands upon some of the ideas we have already encountered in *Patron and Artist** Art, according to the normal or traditional view, consists in "doing things well," and not in a particular kind of thing, as moderns suppose, but in anything worth doing. Beauty is a positive quality of things (whereas ugliness has only a negative existence, that of a "privation" in the Aristotelian sense), and it is not "transferable" from one object to another, which explains why it cannot be achieved by the mere copying or superficial imitation of an object: but things can be beautiful simply because they are well made and suited to their use, even if the artist had no intention of producing beauty or provoking "aesthetic pleasure." To know the inner nature of a thing, and consequently the kind of perfection of which it is capable, it must be studied from the point of view of its causes and the relations between these causes; The author thus presents here the theory of the four causes: final, material, efficient, and formal, which correspond respectively to the four essential elements in the production of any work of art: the purpose, the material, the tools, and the idea or mental image. The perfection of an object depends on the harmony of these different elements; once this harmony is achieved, beauty necessarily results, and we are in the presence of a true work of art, in the most legitimate sense of the word.

• E. Techoueyres – *In Search of Unity, Essays in Philosophy medical and scientific*

(J.-B. Baillière et Fils Bookstore, Paris).

The first "essay," which gives the volume its title, bears this rather significant subtitle: The Aspirations of the Hindu Soul and the Tendencies of Contemporary Western Science; it is thus one of those attempts at reconciliation whose illusory nature we have often described. Moreover, this attempt here involves a complete misunderstanding of the nature of Hindu doctrines: the author sees in them only "philosophy," "research," and purely human "thought," which he believes tend toward the same ends as secular science. It must be said that he appears to have been misled in this respect by what he calls "modern and syncretic Indian thought," that is to say, by the writings of a few authors influenced by Western ideas and who have little Hinduism beyond...

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* [December 1936.]

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their origin. There are many confusions here, some of them quite strange, such as taking "mind" for "spirit," believing that the "heart" represents feeling for Hindus as for modern Westerners, and, even more seriously, seeing in India a "philosophy of becoming" that "communes closely with the guiding ideas of William James and Bergson"! Of the other "essays," which are devoted mainly to questions of scientific "methodology," we will say little: they are, on the whole, very "Bergsonian" in inspiration; it is certainly not by confusing everything that one achieves unity; on the contrary, one must know how to put each thing in its place, and the "antagonisms" themselves are not an "error," provided that one limits their scope to the domain to which they actually apply; but how could one understand true unity when one conceives of nothing beyond "becoming"?

• Pierre Ayet – Notes on Evil

(Les Cahiers du Sud, Marseille)

This small volume begins with a few considerations that might suggest the author has at least glimpsed some factors contributing to modern deviation; but then, instead of elaborating on them, he attacks "abstractions" (in the common sense of the word) such as "pure reason" and the "spirit of nature," which obviously cannot lead to clear or "positive" conclusions. It is not very clear what the "perfect world" is as he conceives it, nor where it might be situated, nor indeed what the "fall" is; what is lacking to illuminate all this is a knowledge of "cyclic laws," which philosophical speculation in no way compensates for. On more specific points, many things would call for corrections: the assertion of a kind of radical "pluralism," with the very Western idea that the passage from multiplicity to unity constitutes a "loss"; the confusion of intellect with reason, and the astonishing assertions that "there is no intuitive knowledge" and that "all intuition requires verification," which show that in reality what is at issue is not intuition at all; let us pass over some interpretations of symbols that are really too "personal," such as the one that makes the cross the "symbol of the absolute," and also over certain invectives against "priestly dogmatism"... There are, however, also, throughout all this, some curious and interesting remarks, for example on rhythm, on illness, on "parasitism"; but, in general, why not strive to express what one thinks in a less vague and less nebulous form?

• René Lacroix-A-l'Henri – *Radiesthetic Theories and Methods*

(Henri Dangles, Paris).

This book clearly marks an effort to confine dowsing within "reasonable" limits; the author, who also clearly identifies as Catholic, seems to have perceived, better than most of his colleagues, the danger of certain

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"Exaggerations"; the "divinatory" applications, in particular, cause him some concern, which we can only agree with. However, when he declares that "true dowsing should not lead to spiritualism," we fear he may be deluding himself, for the boundary is more difficult to draw than he believes; and might these suspect affinities not, in fact, be the very reason for the "launch" of dowsing in our time? He himself, moreover, cannot help but resort to the methods he calls "mental," which are not necessarily so, but which are certainly "psychic"; his so-called "Chinese" and "Egyptian" methods, which are based only on a rather fanciful application of certain symbols, or even the construction of his "Pluto rod," do not seem to us to be entirely blameless in this regard. His list of "harmful waves," where physical and psychic influences are curiously intertwined, is still quite instructive in this respect; if his intention is to make dowsing a purely physical science, in the sense currently given to this word, one cannot say that he is on the path to success; moreover, we believe that this is impossible, or else… it would no longer be dowsing. – Incidentally, we should point out to the author that, contrary to what he seems to believe, the article on dowsing that appeared here last year is not ours at all: *suum cuigue…*

July 1937

- **J. Evola – *Il Mistero del Graal et la Tradition ghibellina dell'Impero***

(G. Laterza e Figli, Bari).

The author first points out the inadequacy of the various perspectives—literary, mystical, and also ethnological and folkloric—from which the question of the Grail and related traditions has most commonly been studied. Without placing oneself on the ground of a metaphysical tradition, in the broadest and most complete sense of the word, one cannot grasp its true meaning. Even the parallels that have been drawn with elements found elsewhere can only acquire real value if considered according to the appropriate "spirit," that is, the properly traditional spirit. The Grail and its "quest" can, in this respect, be linked to what Hesiod designates as the "cycle of heroes," considering these heroes as beings endowed with the possibility of returning to the "primordial state" and thus preparing the way for a new "golden age." And one can immediately discern from this a certain connection with the concept of the "Holy Empire," which, in truth, never fully materialized. Strangely enough, the principal texts relating to the Grail all appeared during a very brief period, coinciding with the culminating phase of medieval tradition, particularly chivalry, as if they represented the manifestation

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sudden, at a certain point, of a kind of subterranean current that soon became invisible again; then there was a resumption later, after the destruction of the Templars, who appear to have been succeeded, in a more secretive form, by organizations that themselves were not unrelated to the Grail tradition. – What makes the book particularly interesting is the examination of the many more or less specific points, whose symbolic meaning the author strives to elucidate, and into the details of which it is naturally impossible for us to go here; there are some of these points that we ourselves have already addressed in *The *King of the World** and in some of our articles, as he reminds us on several occasions, and there are others to which we may perhaps have the opportunity to return later; for the moment, we can only recommend the reading of this work to all those who are interested in this question, and more especially insofar as it is linked to the traditions and symbols referring to the “Center of the World”. It cannot be said, of course, that everything is entirely clarified, but this is not a reproach, for that is undoubtedly impossible, and the subject is one of those which are truly inexhaustible; but we believe at least that one could hardly find elsewhere an equivalent of all the elements of interpretation which are gathered here.

• J. Evola – *Il Mito del Sangue*

(Ulrico Hoepli, Milano).

This small volume is a history of racism, from the theories of Count Gobineau and Vacher de Lapouge, then of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, to the new developments it has recently undergone in Germany, where it has taken on the character of a sort of "official" doctrine. The term "myth" is not used here in the sense of a mere imaginative fiction, but rather in that of "an idea that derives its persuasive force primarily from non-rational elements, an idea that is valuable for the suggestive power it embodies, and, consequently, for its capacity to ultimately translate into action." The author strives to be as impartial as possible in his exposition, although, naturally, he does not conceal the contradictions that exist between the various conceptions that together constitute racism, and at times even hints at the general criticisms he would have to level at them—criticisms that would focus primarily on the "naturalistic" and "scientistic" character they exhibit in most of their aspects. To be honest, the very notion of race is quite difficult to define precisely, especially since we are forced to acknowledge that no pure race currently exists anywhere. What is rather peculiar, moreover, is that the races, or so-called races, considered by anthropologists and prehistorians, whose work more or less forms the basis of all the theories in question, have absolutely nothing to do with the races that have been traditionally recognized throughout history; it would seem that the same word is used here in two completely different senses. One point, however, where these theories have notably come closer to traditional data is the assertion, so long forgotten in the West, of the Nordic or Hyperborean origin of the primordial civilization. But, here again, many confusions and fanciful or hypothetical interpretations are mixed together in works like those of Herman.

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Wirth, for example, to the recognition of this truth. All of this, in essence, and even in the valid elements found there, or, if you prefer, in the way they are treated, certainly falls more under the purview of modern "research" than of traditional knowledge; and this is precisely why the "naturalistic" point of view, which is essentially that of the secular sciences, can hardly be surpassed; as for what will ultimately emerge from this veritable "chaos" of fermenting ideas, that is, assuredly, a question to which only the future can provide an answer.

• *What use is Art anyway :* Six broadcasts sponsored by Boston Museum of Fine Arts, January and February 1937

(John Stevens, Newport, Rhode Island).

Of the six lectures collected in this booklet, the first two, by Mr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's work had already appeared previously as an article in *the American Review,* and we reviewed it on that occasion* . In two other lectures, Mr. Graham Carey revisits his theory of The *Four Artistic Essentials,* which we recently mentioned** in connection with the same author's *The Majority Report on Art ;* then he examines more specifically the *Technical Essentials,* that is, materials and tools. Finally, Mr. John Howard Benson studies the other two of these four points, which, as we recall, correspond to the four Aristotelian causes: *Essential Purpose* and *Essential Idea,* in other words, the purpose of the work of art and the idea or mental image according to which the artist creates this work, which will be beautiful if it is perfect in its kind, if it is truly what it should be.

• R. Francé – *The Senses of the Plant*

Translated from German by Mrs. J. Baar (Adyar Publishers, Paris).

This little book, insofar as it merely presents a statement of facts, contains some truly curious insights into plant life; whether plants possess senses in the true sense of the word, just as animals do, is another question, and, in any case, it is quite debatable that life should be defined essentially by sensitivity. These assertions, moreover, stem from an intention that is all too evident: there is an "evolutionary" spirit at play here that goes so far as to deny all natural classification, and that mistakes for unity what is merely confusion; the unity of all things in principle does not preclude the real distinction of species within their order, any more than that of individuals; but, to understand this, one must conceive of this unity quite differently than that of "forces"

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* [Reviews of journal articles. April 1937: *The Use of Art* (January 1937); November 1937: *Is Art a superstition or a way of life?* (Summer 1937).]

** [June 1937.]

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"creators and transformers of nature." These are, moreover, ideas that could simply be considered modern, rather than specifically theosophical, were it not for the occasional discreet allusion to "nature spirits," which ordinary readers will probably not notice any more than the cross-shaped tie pin adorning the author's portrait…

• Khan Sahib Khaja Khan – *The Secret of Ana'l Haqq*

(The Hogarth Press, Madras).

This book is a translation of a Persian work, *Irshâdatul Arifîn,* by Sheikh Ibrahim Gazur-i-Elahi of Shakarkote, but a translation arranged into chapters to group together everything related to a single topic, thus facilitating comprehension. The author, in explaining his intentions, unfortunately speaks of "propaganda of the esoteric teachings of Islam," as if esotericism could lend itself to any kind of propaganda; if this was indeed his aim, we cannot say that he succeeded in this regard, for readers with no prior knowledge of *tasawwuf* will undoubtedly struggle to grasp the true meaning behind an English expression that is all too often terribly flawed and more than inaccurate. This flaw, compounded, with regard to the Arabic quotations, by a transcription that strangely disfigures them, is most regrettable, for, for those already familiar with the subject matter, it contains material of the greatest interest. The central point of these teachings is the doctrine of the "Supreme Identity," as the title itself indicates, which only has the misfortune of seeming to link it to a specific formula, that of al-Hallaj, whereas nothing of the sort appears in the text itself. This doctrine illuminates and, in a way, governs all considerations relating to various subjects, such as the degrees of Existence, the divine attributes, *al-fanÿ* and *al-baqÿ,* the methods and stages of initiatic development, and many other questions besides. Reading this

This work is to be recommended, not to those to whom one might wish to address "propaganda" which would in any case be completely out of place, but on the contrary to those who already possess sufficient knowledge to derive real benefit from it.

• Paul Brunton – *A Hermit in the Himalayas*

(Leonard and Co., London).

This new book by Mr. Paul Brunton is, in a way, the journal of a "retreat" he undertook in the Himalayas, near the Indo-Tibetan border, after having tried in vain to obtain permission to stay in Tibet itself. One should not expect to find any unity in it: descriptions of the region and accounts of various incidents and conversations with a few rare visitors are interspersed with reflections on the most varied subjects; the whole thing, moreover, is a pleasant read. Perhaps the most curious thing about it is the constant tension one senses between certain aspirations of the author and his desire to remain, despite everything, "a man of the 20th century" (and we might add, a Westerner); he resolves it as best he can.

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by making "Yoga" for his own use, a concept which he himself describes as "heterodox", and by limiting all his ambition, in the spiritual order, to obtaining a state of calm and inner balance which is certainly, in itself, a very appreciable thing, but which is still far from any true metaphysical realization!

- **A. Savoret – *The Secret Forces of Life***

(Éditions de Psyché, Paris).

This brochure, despite its rather ambitious title, is essentially what one might call the "monograph" of a healer, who, moreover, seems to possess somewhat exceptional abilities; it is not of interest to us from this perspective, but only for the few more general ideas expressed within it. The author, distinguishing different categories of healers, magnetizers, and others, writes that "the act of allowing oneself to be put to sleep, of surrendering one's conscious personality to the hands of a stranger, is repugnant to our Western conception of life"; so how is it that hypnotism is precisely a Western phenomenon, and that practices of this kind are rigorously condemned by Easterners? On the other hand, we see here once again how easily the word "spiritual" is misused: the psychic realm is quite extensive and varied enough to encompass everything in question, and just because a healer consciously or unconsciously employs forces external to themselves does not mean that these forces are necessarily spiritual in nature. We do not deny that spiritual influences (which, incidentally, are certainly not "radiations") can, in certain cases, intervene to produce healings, through human beings or otherwise; but nothing (except a medium's vision, which is truly insufficient) indicates that this is the case in the matter under consideration; and besides, that such influences would go so far as to mummify chops from a distance—that is, after all, rather difficult to accept!

- **Henri-L. Mieville – *Towards a Philosophy of the Mind or of the Totality***

(Éditions des Trois Collines, Lausanne, Librairie Félix Alcan, Paris).

We would certainly have ignored the publication of this large book of Protestant philosophy had it not been pointed out to us that the author had seen fit to venture into territory far removed from his own, to attack the Brahmanical tradition… and ourselves; a rather unfortunate incursion, let's say it at once, but one that nevertheless deserves a few words of clarification. What is most striking is that the criticisms he formulates rest almost entirely on misinterpretations of the terms we use: thus, he refuses to admit that one can "confine rational thought to the individual" because, he says, it "is valid in principle for every thinking being"; but, alas, "every thinking being" is precisely, for us, something that belongs to the

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a purely individual domain, and it seems to us that we have taken sufficient precautions to explain it without leaving any room for ambiguity. For him, "non-dualism" is the "doctrine of the non-duality of mind and matter," whereas we have taken great care to specify that it is not at all about that, and that, moreover, the very notion of "matter" is nowhere to be found in Hindu doctrine. Brahmanical metaphysics, or even metaphysics without an epithet, certainly does not "consist" of "propositions affirming relations between concepts"; it is absolutely independent of all "verbal imagination," as well as of all "discursive thought"; he is clearly confusing it with the pseudo-metaphysics of the philosophers! That he is incapable of conceiving of Non-Being beyond Being, or unity without multiplicity, or even "intellectual intuition totally distinct from reason," we readily admit, and besides, we can do nothing about it; But at least he should refrain from imposing his own limitations on us. It's still acceptable for him to give words a different meaning than we do; but what is completely unacceptable is for him to attribute this meaning to them even when he wants to explain what we ourselves have said, so that he simply gives the impression of someone who can't read… What is frankly amusing is the final reproach of "never being where the adversary would like to engage in combat"; does he imagine, then, that traditional doctrine consents to acknowledge "adversaries" and that it can stoop to "battles" or any kind of discussion? These are strange illusions: in this domain, let's be clear, one either understands or one doesn't, and that's all there is to it; it may be very regrettable for philosophers and other laypeople, but that's the way it is. Under these conditions, it is quite obvious that the so-called "opponent" will never be able to do anything but struggle in a vacuum, and that all his arguments will inevitably be wrong; we certainly do not mind that we have been given the opportunity to observe this once again.

October 1937

- **Gaston Georgel – *Rhythms in History***

(At the author's home, Belfort).

This book is an attempt to apply cosmic cycles to the history of peoples, to the phases of growth and decline of civilizations. It is truly regrettable that the author, in undertaking such a work, did not have access to more complete traditional data, and that he only knew some of it through more or less dubious intermediaries who mixed it with their own imaginations. He did, however, clearly see that what is essential to consider is the period of the precession of the equinoxes and its divisions, even though he adds some complications that ultimately seem rather pointless. But the terminology adopted to designate certain secondary periods betrays many...

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misunderstandings and confusions. Thus, the twelfth of the precession cannot certainly be called a "cosmic year"; this name would be much more appropriate either for the entire period or, even more so, for its half, which is precisely the "great year" of the Ancients. On the other hand, the duration of 25,765 years is probably borrowed from some hypothetical calculation by modern astronomers; but the true duration traditionally given is 25,920 years; a singular consequence is that, in fact, the author sometimes finds himself taking exact numbers for certain divisions, for example 2,160 and 540, but then considers them only "approximate." Let us add yet another observation on this subject; he believes he finds confirmation of the 539-year cycle in certain biblical texts that suggest the number 77 × 7 = 539; But, precisely, he should have used 77 × 7 + 1 = 540 here, if only by analogy with the Jubilee year, which was not the 49th but rather the 50th, i.e., 7 × 7 + 1 = 50. As for the applications, while there are some correspondences and parallels that are not only curious but truly noteworthy, we must say that there are others that are much less striking or even seem somewhat forced, to the point of rather unpleasantly recalling the childishness of certain occultists; there are also many reservations to be made on other points, for example, the fanciful figures given for the chronology of ancient civilizations. On the other hand, it would have been interesting to see if the author could have continued to obtain results of the same kind by further extending his field of investigation, because there have been and still are many other peoples than those he considers; In any case, we do not believe it is possible to establish a general "synchronism," because, for different peoples, the starting point must also be different; and, moreover, diverse civilizations do not simply succeed one another, they also coexist, as can still be seen today. In closing, the author saw fit to make a few attempts at "forecasting the future," albeit within rather limited limits; this is one of the dangers of this kind of research, especially in our time when so-called "prophecies" are so fashionable; certainly, no tradition has ever encouraged such things, and it is precisely to hinder them as much as possible, more than for any other reason, that certain aspects of the doctrine of cycles have always been shrouded in obscurity.

• Sri Aurobindo – *Insights and Thoughts*

Translated from English with a preface by Jean Herbert (Union of Printing Houses, Frameries, Belgium).

This small book is the first work by Sri Aurobindo Ghose to be published in French: it is a collection of aphorisms and short fragments on diverse subjects, such as the true purpose of existence, the nature of man and his relationship with the world and with God, the "chains" that prevent beings from attaining liberation, and others; all of this, which is obviously impossible to summarize, is meant to be read and, above all, meditated upon. It is to be hoped that this translation will be followed by that of other works.
more important than a man who, although he sometimes presents the doctrine in a form that is perhaps a little too "modernized," nonetheless undeniably possesses a

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high spiritual value; but we certainly do not think it is desirable, as the author of the preface says, that he should find a Romain Rolland to write his biography… and to disfigure him with his incomprehensible and very Western sentimentality!

• W. Rivier – *The Problem of Life*

(J. Vrin Philosophical Bookstore, Paris).

This is a series of three dialogues in which the author, though the reasons for this are not entirely clear, brings back the characters from Berkeley's work, Hylas and Philonous. These are reflections on "scientific philosophy," inspired by the theories of contemporary physicists, particularly those of Einstein. What is most curious about this is that the author is led to consider a certain possibility of escaping space; however, he admits nothing of the sort for time, as if these two conditions were not exactly of the same order. Moreover, these views, by the very way they are presented, remain merely philosophical and hypothetical; furthermore, they are too often expressed in a rather confused manner; and, even if it is indeed possible to free oneself from space, we fail to see how this justifies declaring space purely illusory. Insofar as all of this departs from "classical" conceptions, it seems that it is more about getting closer to the psyche and occultism than about returning to truly traditional ideas; and this corresponds to a trend which, unfortunately, seems to be spreading more and more today…

• Joseph Iwanicki – *Morin and the mathematical demonstrations of the Existence of God*

(J. Vrin Philosophical Bookstore, Paris).

Although the title hardly gives away the meaning, it is about the astrologer J.-B. Morin de Villefranche, certainly much less known in the aspect in which he appears here, that is to say as a philosopher and as an opponent of Descartes. His mathematically formulated argumentation may have inspired Leibniz to some extent, and he himself had predecessors in this respect, notably Raymond Lull and Lefèvre d'Etaples; it goes without saying, moreover, that these investigations and comparisons of texts are ultimately of little more than pure curiosity.

• D[r] A. Auvard – *Esoteric Medicine*

(Henri Durville, Paris).

In this pamphlet, the author presents a classification of diseases that may be as valid as any other, but which is certainly not esoteric; it is in reality based only on highly questionable theories, and whose theosophical inspiration is

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quite obvious. On the other hand, while it is acceptable to adopt, to a certain extent, conventional terminology for the sake of clarity, it is far less acceptable to feel the need to coin words whose formation defies all linguistic rules! The author has developed a kind of doctrine which he has named "evoluism," a name which clearly indicates its essentially modern tendencies; that is his prerogative, but for him to further claim that this doctrine is fundamentally identical to "Vedism" is more serious and demonstrates a very unfortunate misunderstanding.

• D r A. Auvard – *Esoteric Politics*

(Henri Durville. Paris).

This other work by the same author would give rise to the same criticisms as the previous one, because it is an application, in a different field, of the same theories and the same methods of exposition. We will not dwell on it, but we cannot help but note at least that the government he dreams of implies a strange idea of the "spiritual" and of "theocracy," as well as of initiation: civil servants, mayors and prefects, who will at the same time be priests of the "evolutionary religion," and from among whom will be recruited "initiates" who will still only be senior civil servants, not to mention an "Esoteric Institute" which will enter, upon leaving high school, those who are destined for these administrative careers, this is more reminiscent of Fourierist and Saint-Simonian utopias than of conceptions of a less profane order... What to think also of an enumeration which groups "esoteric *(sic),* Rosicrucian (!), spiritualist, hermeticist, medium, philosopher," as "displaying free thought"? But, frankly, can we expect much better from someone who ends all his books with the cry of "Long live ethics"?

• Georges Barbarin – *The Book of Gentle Death*

(Adyar Editions, Paris).

The author has gathered in this book a large number of observations concerning all possible kinds of death, as well as testimonies from people who have been on the verge of death, all tending to prove that, contrary to popular belief, death itself is not at all painful, whatever suffering may have preceded it due to illness. Perhaps we should not generalize so much, for there must be many different cases; and it seems rather imprudent to assert, in accordance with medical prejudices, that consciousness must be entirely abolished as soon as it no longer has the possibility of manifesting itself outwardly. It is true that the author is careful to point out that he intended to limit himself here strictly to considering the "physical" aspect of death; but can this aspect be so isolated from everything else when it comes to knowing, not what the physiological symptoms are for the observer "from the outside," but what the dying person actually experiences? – Mr. Georges Barbarin himself sent a letter to the Directorate of *Traditional Studies* in which he stated that,

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contrary to what we said about a publication entitled *The Monthly Key** , He is no longer part of the "Priory of Bazainville Group" and has even broken off all relations with it; we gladly acknowledge this, but,
Since this "split" seems to have been announced nowhere, he will have to admit that it would have been rather difficult for us to guess it… As for what we wrote about his previous book**, and to which he returns on this occasion, he is in no position to complain: it is a fact, beyond our control, that anyone who contributes to spreading "pyramid prophecies" thereby plays into the hands of certain dubious "influences"; those who are acting in good faith, and we have never doubted that this is the case with Mr. Barbarin, do so unconsciously, but the result is the same; Mr. Barbarin can, moreover, take comfort in the thought that there are many others besides him, and certainly more "powerful" in every respect, who act in this way without the slightest suspicion of the "influences" to which they are subjected! Finally, we would ask Mr. Barbarin would like to note that we are absolutely not "mystics", and that we have no reason whatsoever to show solidarity with those who, while constantly talking about "spirituality", have an idea of it that certainly has nothing in common with the only true spirituality that we can recognize, in accordance with the authentic traditional teachings that alone matter to us.

November 1937

- **Enel – *A Message from the Sphinx***

(Rider and Co, London).

The reservations we expressed last year regarding the purely hypothetical nature of any attempt to reconstruct and interpret the ancient Egyptian tradition, in connection with another work by the same author, would also apply to this one, in the first part of which we find, more briefly presented, some of the same ideas. The book begins with a study of hieroglyphic writing, which is based on perfectly sound and, moreover, fairly well-known principles concerning the plurality of meanings of this script; but, when one wants to apply these principles and go into detail, how can one be sure of not introducing more or less fantasy? Let us also note that the term "ideographic" does not apply, as stated here, to the simple representation of sensible objects, and that, when it comes to writing, it is essentially synonymous with "symbolic"; And there are many other improprieties of language that are no less regrettable: for example, it is quite certain that Egyptian doctrine must have been fundamentally "monotheistic," because every traditional doctrine without exception is.

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* [Reviews of journal articles, June 1937.]
** [November 1936: *The Secret of the Great Pyramid or the End of the Adamic World.]*

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essentially, in the sense that it cannot fail to affirm the fundamental unity; but, if this word "monotheism" thus presents an acceptable meaning, even outside of specifically religious forms, do we have the right, on the other hand, to call "pantheism" what everyone has agreed to call "polytheism"? Another, more serious misunderstanding concerns magic, which the author clearly confuses in many cases with theurgy (a confusion which amounts in short to that of the psychic and the spiritual), because he sees it everywhere that the "power of the word" is involved, which leads him to believe that it must have played a crucial role at the very beginning, whereas, on the contrary, its predominance, as we have explained, could only have been, in Egypt as elsewhere, the result of a more or less late degeneration. Before going any further, let us note a rather unfortunate concession to modern "evolutionary" theories: if the people of those ancient times had the crude or rudimentary mentality attributed to them, where could these "initiates" have come from, among whom, in the same periods, we find precisely the opposite? Between anti-traditional "evolutionism" and the acceptance of traditional data, a choice must necessarily be made, and any compromise can only lead to insoluble contradictions. – The second part is devoted to the Hebrew Kabbalah, which might be surprising if one were unfamiliar with the author's ideas on the subject: for him, in fact, the Hebrew tradition stems directly from the Egyptian tradition; they are like "two consecutive links in the same chain." We have already stated our opinion on this matter, but we will elaborate further: the author is certainly right to admit that the Egyptian tradition was derived from Atlantis (which, moreover, we can state more clearly than he does, was not itself the seat of the primordial tradition), but it was not the only one, and the same seems particularly true of the Chaldean tradition; the Arabic teaching on the "three Hermes," which we discussed on another occasion, indicates this connection quite clearly; but, if the principal source is thus the same, the difference in these forms was probably determined above all by the encounter with other currents, one coming from the South for Egypt, and the other from the North for Chaldea. Now, the Hebrew tradition is essentially "Abrahamic," therefore of Chaldean origin; the "readaptation" carried out by Moses could undoubtedly, due to the circumstances of the place, have been aided incidentally by Egyptian elements, especially with regard to certain more or less secondary traditional sciences; But it could in no way have had the effect of removing this tradition from its own lineage and transferring it to another lineage, foreign to the people for whom it was expressly intended and in whose language it was to be formulated. Moreover, once the common origin and foundation of all traditional doctrines is recognized, the observation of certain similarities in no way implies the existence of a direct lineage: this is the case, for example, with the connections the author seeks to establish between the *Sephiroth* and the Egyptian "Ennead," assuming they are justified; and strictly speaking, even if one considers these resemblances to be too specific to trace back to the primordial tradition, the kinship between the Egyptian and Chaldean traditions would in any case be more than sufficient to explain them. As for claiming that early Hebrew writing was derived from hieroglyphs, this is a completely gratuitous hypothesis, since, in fact, no one knows for certain.

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precisely what this writing was; all the evidence one can find in this regard tends to suggest the opposite; and, moreover, it is entirely unclear how the association of numbers with letters, which is essential in Hebrew, could have been borrowed from the hieroglyphic system. Furthermore, the close similarities that exist between Hebrew and Arabic, to which no mention is made here, clearly contradict this hypothesis, for it would be quite difficult to seriously maintain that the Arabic tradition also originated in Egypt! We will pass quickly over the third part, which begins with views on art that, while containing some valid points, nevertheless begin with a highly questionable assertion; It is not possible to say, at least without specifying, that "there is only one art," for it is all too obvious that the fundamental unity—that is, of ideas expressed symbolically—in no way excludes the multiplicity of forms. In the following chapters, the author provides an overview, not of the authentic traditional sciences as one might have wished, but of the few more or less distorted remnants that have survived to this day, especially in their "divinatory" aspect; the influence exerted on him by "occultist" conceptions is particularly evident here. Furthermore, it is entirely inaccurate to say that some of the sciences taught in ancient temples were simply equivalent to modern, "academic" sciences; In reality, even where there may be an apparent similarity of object, the point of view was nonetheless entirely different, and there is always a veritable abyss between traditional and secular sciences. Finally, we cannot avoid pointing out a few minor errors, for some are truly astonishing: for example, the well-known image of the "churn of the sea" is given as that of a "god Samudra Mutu" *(sic) !* But this is perhaps even more excusable than the mistakes concerning things that should be more familiar to the author than Hindu tradition, and especially the Hebrew language. Let us not even mention what is merely a matter of transcription, although this is terribly "negligent"; but how can one constantly call *Ain Bekar* what is in reality *Aiq Bekar* (a cryptographic system as well known in Arabic as in Hebrew, and where one could see the prototype of Masonic alphabets), confuse, moreover, with regard to their numerical values, the final form of *Kaph* with that of *nun,* and even mention in addition a " final *samek* " which never existed and which is nothing other than a *mem ?*

How can one be certain that the translators of Genesis rendered *thehom* as "waters," in a place where the word in the Hebrew text is *maim* and not *thehom,* or that " *Ain Soph* literally means the Ancient of Years," when the strictly literal translation of this name is "without limit"? *Yeshirah* is "Formation" and not "Creation" (which is *Beriah) ; Zohar* does not mean "Celestial Chariot" (an obvious confusion with the *Merkabah),* but "Splendor"; and the author seems to be completely ignorant of what the *Talmud is,* since he considers it to be formed from the *Notarikon,* the *Temurah ,* and the *Gematria,* which, moreover, are not "books" as he claims, but methods of Kabbalistic interpretation! We will stop there; But it must be agreed that such errors hardly encourage blind acceptance of the author's assertions on less easily verifiable points and placing unreserved trust in his Egyptological theories…

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• Jean Herbert – *Some great thinkers of modern India*

Talks broadcast on "Radio-Geneva" in June 1937 (Union of Printing Houses, Frameries, Belgium).

The lectures collected in this small volume, clearly intended for a general audience, might lead one to fear a certain tendency toward popularization on the part of their author; and this necessarily imposes excessive simplifications, with which some subjects do not readily lend themselves. Thus, it is quite accurate to present Sri Ramakrishna, Sri

Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, who is being discussed here, or are they not, rather, especially the first two, something entirely different, of which it is certainly hardly possible to convey an idea to the European "general public"? Similarly, it is erroneous to say that Sri Ramakrishna "abandoned Hinduism" at a certain point and that he "became a Christian," then a Muslim; the truth is quite different, as Mr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy has explained here; but it would certainly be very difficult to make unprepared listeners understand this. We will therefore not dwell on it further, and will only make one more remark: concerning Sri Ramana Maharshi, Mr. Herbert says that his teaching "has this remarkable peculiarity of claiming to bring absolutely nothing new"; however, this, far from being a "peculiarity," is on the contrary the only normal and valid attitude in any traditional civilization; And, we would add, that is precisely why there can be no "thinkers" there, and especially no inventors of philosophical systems, that is to say, no men who put individual originality above truth.

• Alfredo Cavalli – *Man is no longer unknown*

(Eluni Publishing, Mantes-Gassicourt).

The title of this book, which is clearly intended as a response to that of Dr. Alexis Carrel 's **Man, the Unknown* ,* is certainly ambitious; unfortunately, the content hardly lives up to it, for the considerations that the author presents as extraordinary discoveries, destined to change the face of the world, are in reality quite dishearteningly rudimentary. At least, that is how they appear at first glance; but, on closer inspection, something even more disturbing emerges: not only does the author allude to "certain particular states" that can only stem from a more or less dubious "psyche," but certain chapters or paragraphs, for example, those on Christ, on "terrestrial currents," on the "analogy of the solar system and the cell," etc., have the characteristic tone of spiritualist "communications." We have already seen, in recent years, far too many "inspired" and "missioned" individuals of all kinds; So, will we have to count on one more?

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December 1937

• Dion Fortune – *The Mystical Kabbalah*

Translated from English by Gabriel Trarieux d'Egmont. (Adyar Publishers, Paris).

The juxtaposition of the two words that form the title of this large volume presents something rather contradictory: in truth, what it deals with is neither mystical nor initiatory; it is primarily magical, which is something quite different. Indeed, there is constant talk of "powers," "visions," "evocations," and "astral projections"—all things that are simultaneously dangerous, even when they amount to mere autosuggestion, and rather insignificant, even when they produce some real results. More precisely, it is "ceremonial magic."

This is precisely the point, and we can see in it a rather compelling confirmation of what we said on this subject some time ago: it is interesting to note, first of all, in this regard, the frequency with which the word "ceremonies" recurs in this book, while the word "rites" appears only very rarely; secondly, the explicit admission that "the ceremonial is pure psychology," and that it is essentially intended "to act on the imagination of the operator"; this is also our opinion, since it is precisely in this that it differs from true rites, but it goes without saying that our assessment of the value of such methods differs entirely from that of the author. The peculiar idea of designating as "objective" and "subjective" what is respectively "macrocosmic" and "microcosmic" is also quite significant in the same respect: if the results obtained by a being, with regard to its own development, are to be only "subjective," then we might as well say that they are nonexistent!

There is constant appeal to the imagination, and also, more disturbingly, to the "subconscious," to such an extent that great emphasis is placed on Freud's infamous theories; indeed, Kabbalah has fallen very low… In fact, none of this should surprise us, since we know that the author belonged to the *Golden Dawn* before founding his own school under the name " *Brotherhood of the Inner Light ,"* and that we see him cite MacGregor Mathers, and…, as his principal "authorities."
Aleister Crowley, to which are added incidentally various other occultist and theosophist writers. If the "Christian Kabbalah" which was formed at the time of the Renaissance was already very far from the authentic Hebrew Kabbalah, what can be said of the "occultist Kabbalah" which came into being in the 19th century and where the few traditional data which have nevertheless survived are drowned under a mass of heterogeneous elements and of sometimes very uncertain origin, of correspondences blurred much less intentionally than by the effect of a manifest ignorance, all assembled in a "syncretism" which, whatever the promoters of the so-called "Western tradition" may say, has absolutely nothing in common with a "synthesis"? In a work such as this, Kabbalah (or, to be more precise, the doctrine of the *Sephiroth,* which is only one of its branches) provides little more than a framework, not to say a pretext, for speculations of the most convoluted nature, and in which even modern science itself occupies a significant place.

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negligible; it seems that this is "treating Kabbalah in a living way," as if authentic Kabbalah were a dead thing and only had the interest of a historical or archaeological curiosity! This intention of "modernization" is moreover expressly admitted by the author, who in this at least has the merit of frankness, but who, because of his clearly affirmed "evolutionary" tendencies, sees a perfection in what can only appear to us as a rather lamentable degeneration... Under these conditions, when we are told of certain "manuscripts that only initiates know," we allow ourselves to strongly doubt, not their existence, but their traditional value; And those who know what we think of the so-called modern Western "initiatory schools" will easily understand that we cannot help but smile at the invocation of "the real and legitimate occult secrets, which only initiation reveals," even if there were not, alongside this, a mention of "correspondence courses" which says a little too much about the quality of this "initiation"! – It would be superfluous, after all this, to dwell on errors of detail, although some are quite amusing, such as those which consist of putting the "Eastern Path," as if there were only one, opposite the "Western Path," of taking Confucianism for a "metaphysical law," of attributing to the "Vedantins" the theosophical phantasmagoria of the "Rays and Rounds," or even of quoting the well-known phrase of the "Emerald Tablet" in the form "that which is above is below." It is also quite curious that one can present the Quakers as "a purely initiatory school," confuse *Bhakti-Yoga* with religious exotericism, or believe oneself capable of effectively celebrating Mass outside of any "apostolic succession"; there would even be much to say about the special mentality that this last point reveals… Let us also note the exaggeration in considering the "Tree of Life" exclusively as constituting the sole basis of all symbolism, as well as the somewhat excessive importance attributed to the Tarot, and, if only as a curiosity, a kind of obsession with the "Green Ray" which reminds us of strange stories… There is yet another particular question to which we must say a word: it may be remembered that, at the end of our study on *Kundalini-Yoga,* we indicated the correspondence of the *Sephiroth,* considered from the "microcosmic" point of view, with the *chakras* of the Hindu tradition. It appears, something which we were completely unaware of at the time, since it is here that we see it mentioned for the first time, that Crowley and General Fuller attempted to establish such a correlation; but, moreover, the correspondences which they give, and which are reproduced in this book, are both erroneous, mainly for lack of having noticed that, by considering each of the three pairs of *Sephiroth* situated at the same common level representing the polarization of a single principle, the ten-part *Sephiroth* can be reduced in the simplest way to the seven-part *chakras.*

Finally, regarding the presentation of the work, it would certainly be much better to refrain from including certain words in Hebrew characters altogether, rather than printing them in such a way that almost no letters are found to be correct; and furthermore, why does the translator always write " *la* Yoga," " *la* Swastika," or even " *la* Séfer Yetzirah"? One should also, concerning the translation, be wary of English words which, while closely resembling French words, sometimes have a completely different meaning…

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• Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *Is Art a superstition or a way of life?*

(John Stevens, Newport, Rhode Island).

The article previously published under this title in *the American Review,* which we discussed last month, has been reprinted in a booklet that is part of the same series that already includes *The Majority Report on Art** , by Mr. Graham Carey, and the a series of lectures entitled *What use is Art anyway?* **

• Jean Marquès-Rivière – *Secret India and its magic*

(Les Œuvres Françaises, Paris.)

This small volume presents itself as a travelogue, not merely descriptive, but accompanied by doctrinal insights, and to which, in truth, one sometimes gets the impression that the author has had to mix in some recollections of his reading. This observation is prompted not so much by the fact that, overall, there is something reminiscent of the "style" of Mr. Paul Brunton's book, which we reviewed some time ago***, and which happens to have been translated into French under the rather similar title of * *L'Inde secrète* (Secret India);* it is primarily because one encounters here and there, in the remarks attributed to various interlocutors, formulas or phrases already seen elsewhere. There are even a few implausibilities: for example, a certain story of "Asian Rosicrucians," which brings to mind at least two highly suspicious affairs, of which we know that the author himself was also aware; An astrological correspondence between different traditions, indicated in the same chapter, contains not a single correct attribution. Nevertheless, there are other excellent points, for example, the reflections on the impossibility Europeans, by their very attitude, generally place themselves in a position of incomprehension of anything from the East; on the true meaning of Hindu rites; on the erroneous nature of opinions circulating in the West regarding Tantrism; and on the nature of the only true secret, which resides in the "incommunicable"—something that certainly has nothing to do with the so-called "occult secrets" mentioned earlier. However, when one considers the author's previous "variations," one cannot help but feel some unease at the renewed sympathy he shows for the East and its doctrines; will this return be lasting? To be perfectly frank, some rather "tendentious" confusions, such as referring to "mysticism" when it is actually something else entirely—a confusion we have encountered all too often—inevitably bring to mind other sympathies, as unexpected as they are self-serving, that have manifested themselves in certain circles in recent years, and which we have had occasion to discuss on several occasions. Let us hope, however, that this one is of a better nature, and that there is no

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* [June 1937.]
** [July 1937.]
*** [June 1935: *A Search in secret India.]*

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suffer nothing from the "missionary" ulterior motives that pierced through certain passages of *Buddhism in Tibet...* In any case, let us not forget, regarding confusions, to point out a rather unfortunate comparison of Hindu methods of spiritual development with modern psychological methods (yet another false assimilation that seems decidedly to be spreading more and more), and also the curious misunderstanding that makes essentially psychic faculties look like "possibilities of the human *body* "; alongside the very accurate views that we noted earlier, things like that put a strangely discordant note; but at least it is fortunate that, despite the title, magic is not much discussed.

- **Paul the Cour – *The Age of Aquarius (The Advent of Ganymede)***

(Atlantis, Vincennes).

We have already had occasion to point out the peculiar obsession that so-called "prophecies" in general, and the announcement of the coming "Age of Aquarius" in particular, constitute for some of our contemporaries. This book is still connected to this kind of preoccupation; moreover, there is little that is new in it, since most of what it contains had already been said by the author in his articles *in Atlantis.* We will only note that he presents himself more than ever as the heir and continuator of the Hiéron of Paray-le-Monial, for which there is perhaps not too much reason to congratulate him, because, while there were, in this "center of Christian esotericism" of a rather special character, some interesting ideas, there were even more fanciful fantasies: Mr. de Sarachaga's imagination was almost as fertile as that of Mr.
Paul Le Cour himself! It is from this, moreover, that he derived the famous theory *of Aor-Agni,* in which he saw a prodigious revelation, and whose trace he now believes he finds in the most varied names and words; but we have already spoken enough previously about all these fancies not to return to them at greater length. Attempting to answer the objections we have raised against the association of these two terms *Aor-Agni,* Mr. Paul Le Cour first remarks that "there are many terms composed of words from different languages"; this is true for modern languages, although linguists do not readily admit this hybrid formation process, which they rightly consider highly incorrect; but, as far as sacred languages are concerned, such a thing is quite impossible. Then, he adds "that he does not see on what basis the prohibition of seeing in fire the light *Aor* and the heat *Agni* would be based "; Unfortunately, what we have said and what we maintain is that, while *Aor* is indeed light in Hebrew, *Agni,* in Sanskrit, is not merely heat, but fire itself, both light and heat; so, what value can such an answer possibly have? – There is also a curious detail in this book that we would regret not mentioning: in one place (p. 67), the beginning of the Jewish era is set at 4000 years before the Christian era (which is a pure and simple confusion with the Masonic era), and, in another (p. 139), at 4320; the author would do well to at least agree with himself; but what is most unfortunate is

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that neither of these two indications is correct, because the said Jewish era actually begins 3761 years before the Christian era!

• Gabriel Trarieux d'Egmont – *What will 1938 be like?*

(Flammarion, Paris).

Predictions for the coming year are not within our purview, especially since they inevitably touch upon a domain—politics—that we have no intention of entering into. Besides, we know quite well what we think of the current state of astrology; the most astonishing thing under these circumstances is that it sometimes, despite everything, produces accurate results, and perhaps these should be attributed in large part, as the author of this book acknowledges, to the special faculties of the astrologer who obtains them, to a kind of "intuition," if you will, but one that should be careful not to confuse with true intellectual intuition, which is certainly of a completely different order. In any case, alongside these predictions, we find here certain considerations of a more general scope, some of which still relate to the famous "Age of Aquarius" (the author even announces his intention to publish a work bearing this title, in which he was preempted by Mr. Paul Le Cour): it would seem that we have already been in this age since 1793, while others nevertheless assert that it has not yet begun, or even that it will not begin for several centuries; it is truly singular that we cannot at least agree on this point! Naturally, there is also discussion of the so-called "prophecies" that are current in our time; but the author, more reasonable in this than many others, recognizes that we should not accept them all without discernment, and even less so the numerous commentaries that have been added to them; Regarding the "prophets of the Great Pyramid," in particular, he displays a certain skepticism for which we can only commend him. He devotes his last chapter to Nostradamus, who, he says, "is not solely an astrologer," which is quite true, but whom he primarily wants to see as a "clairvoyant," which is far less so; in fact, in this case, it concerns knowledge of certain traditional sciences other than astrology, although also belonging to the cosmological order, and even more completely lost to our contemporaries…

January 1938

• Robert Maynard Hutchins – *The Higher Learning in America*

(Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn.).

This book, whose author is president of the University of Chicago, is a severe critique of how higher education is currently understood and organized in America, a critique that could certainly be applied also

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in other countries, for, to one degree or another, one finds everywhere the same confusion between disinterested study and mere professional preparation, and the same tendency to sacrifice the former to the latter—in short, what is denounced here as “anti-intellectualism,” and which is quite characteristic of the “practical” mentality of our time. It is particularly worth noting the author’s attitude toward a “progress” that in reality consists only of an ever-increasing accumulation of facts and details, ultimately leading, with the support of evolutionary theories, to the triumph of “empiricism” and “professionalism” in all fields, and to the indefinite dispersion into “specialties” that make any education of general and truly intellectual scope impossible. It is not for us to examine the remedies proposed to react against this state of affairs, but there is at least one point which is worthy of our attention: the teaching of a University, as conceived by the author, should be ordered entirely in relation to a central discipline which would be like the principle of unity; theology played this role in the Middle Ages; he thinks that this is no longer possible in the present circumstances, but that one could rather return to something analogous to what existed among the Greeks, by appealing, in this respect, to metaphysics, which he seems moreover to conceive in the Aristotelian sense, that is to say, solely "ontological"; However limited this conception may be compared to all that is true metaphysics understood traditionally, it is nonetheless a rather remarkable idea and one whose realization would be highly desirable, especially since it should not be forgotten that it is in short only an "exoteric" teaching, as all university teaching is by definition, and where, consequently, it would probably hardly be possible to go further in this direction.

• Victor-Émile Michelet – *The Companions of the Hierophany*

(Dorbon Aîné, Paris).

Under this somewhat strange title, the author has gathered, as the subtitle indicates, his "memories of the Hermetic movement at the end of the 19th century"; in truth, for greater accuracy, "Hermetic" should be replaced by "occultist," for that is precisely what it is; but indeed, lacking serious foundations, it was merely a "movement" and nothing more: what remains of it today? The book will interest those who knew this milieu, which disappeared quite some time ago, and also those who, having been unable to know it, wish to form an idea of it from the impressions of a direct witness; Moreover, one should not look for the slightest doctrinal assessment here, as the author has confined himself to the purely "picturesque" and anecdotal aspects, which he even presents somewhat incompletely, for it seems that he saw only "writers" in this world, or at least that he considered the characters he encountered there only from this perspective, so true is it that everyone always views things from their own particular "perspective"! Furthermore, there might be reservations to be made on certain points about which he speaks only secondhand: for example, regarding the establishment of relations between Papus and "Monsieur Philippe" with the Russian court, it is not entirely certain that things happened quite as he describes; in any case, what is highly fanciful is the assertion that "Joseph de

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Maistre had created a Martinist Center in Saint Petersburg," and that Tsar Alexander I was "initiated into Martinism," which certainly did not yet exist at that time… The truth is that Joseph de Maistre and Alexander I were both "Knights Beneficent of the Holy City"; but this designation is not that of an "old Order whose creation is commonly attributed either to Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin or to Martinès de Pasqually, but which, in reality, has six centuries of existence"; it is, quite simply, that of the last degree of the Rectified Scottish Rite, as it was titled at the Convent of Lyon in 1778, under the inspiration of Willermoz, then definitively adopted at that of Wilhelmsbad in 1782, which is far from dating back six centuries! We could point out other passages that demonstrate a more or less insufficient level of information, for example, the one devoted to Dr. Henri Favre, of whom it is said, in particular, that "he published hardly anything but his *Battles of Heaven* "; yet we have from him an enormous volume entitled *The Three Testaments, a methodical, functional, distributive, and practical examination of the Bible,* published in 1872 and dedicated to Alexandre Dumas fils; we must also acknowledge that we have never seen this work mentioned anywhere, and that is why we mention it here as a curiosity. We should also note that the famous story of Abbé Boullan appears, in this book, reduced to a singularly diminished scale; It is not, of course, that the role of occultists in this affair should be taken too seriously (the real starting point was primarily a joke by Papus, who showed anyone who would listen a log that was supposed to represent Boullan and into which he had stuck a Japanese sword, supposedly to bewitch him); but the very figure of this successor of Vintras is certainly more disturbing than that of a

a mere "primary of witchcraft," and there was more to him than the "few elementary notions of magic" he might have picked up "in seminary teaching"; in fact, this story of the Vintrasian "Carmel" is linked to a whole series of very dark events that took place during the 19th century, and which we would not even dare to assert, given certain underground "ramifications," that do not still have repercussions today…

- **Vladimir Pozner – *The Bit Between the Teeth***

(Denoël Publishers, Paris).

This book is a fictionalized and highly sensationalized account, clearly driven by partisan hostility, of the turbulent career of Baron von Ungern-Sternberg, who had already been mentioned, albeit from a different perspective, in Ferdinand Ossendowski's work, * *Beasts, Men and Gods*.* What is truly curious is that the very existence of this figure was questioned by some at the time, and that the same thing has happened again now; he nevertheless belonged to a well-known Baltic family, related to that of Count Hermann Keyserling, one of whose letters is reproduced in the present book. It may be of interest to those familiar with the latter to set the record straight and shed light on a story that seems to have been deliberately obscured. We will therefore cite in this regard, as what seems to us to give the most accurate idea of the matter, the main passages from letters written in 1924 by the

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Major Antoni Alexandrowicz, a Polish officer who had been, as commander of the Mongolian artillery, under the direct orders of Baron von Ungern-Sternberg in 1918 and 1919: “Baron Ungern was an extraordinary man, a very complicated nature, both from a psychological and a political point of view.

To give a simple summary of his characteristic traits, they could be formulated as follows: 1) he was a fierce opponent of Bolshevism, which he saw as an enemy of all humanity and its spiritual values; 2) he despised the Russians, who in his eyes had betrayed the Entente, having broken their oath of allegiance to the Tsar during the war, then to two revolutionary governments, and subsequently accepting the Bolshevik government; 3) he rarely extended a hand to any Russian, and he associated only with foreigners (and also with Poles, whom he esteemed because of their struggle against Russia); among Russians, he preferred ordinary people to intellectuals, as being less demoralized; 4) he was a mystic and a Buddhist; he nurtured the idea of founding an order of revenge against war; 5) he envisioned the founding of a great Asian empire for the struggle against the materialistic culture of Europe and against Soviet Russia; 6° he was in contact with the Dalai Lama, the "Living Buddha" and representatives of Islam in Asia, and he held the title of priest and Mongol Khan; 7° he was brutal and ruthless as only an ascetic and a sectarian can be; his lack of sensitivity surpassed anything one can imagine, and would seem to be found only in an incorporeal being, with a soul as cold as ice, knowing neither pain, nor pity, nor joy, nor sadness; 8° he had superior intelligence and extensive knowledge; there was no subject on which he could not give a judicious opinion; With a single glance, he could judge the worth of any man he met… At the beginning of June 1918, a Lama predicted to Baron Ungern that he would be wounded at the end of that month, and that he would meet his end after his army had entered Mongolia and his glory had spread throughout the world. Indeed, at dawn on June 28, the Bolsheviks attacked the Dauria station… and the Baron was wounded by a bullet in his left side, above the heart. As for his death as well, the prediction came true: he died just as the glory of his victory filled the entire world.” The last sentence is perhaps an exaggeration, judging by the discussions we alluded to at the beginning; but what seems certain is that he was by no means captured by the Bolsheviks and that, although still very young, he died a natural death, contrary to Mr. Vladimir Pozner’s version. Readers of this work will also be able to see, from these authentic indications, whether such a character could have been, in essence, as he insinuates, merely a simple agent in the service of Japan, or whether he was not more likely driven by influences of a completely different nature. Furthermore, we would add that he was not exactly what one would call a "neo-Buddhist," since, according to information we have received from another source, his family's adherence to Buddhism dated back to the third generation. Moreover, it has recently been reported that "haunting" phenomena have been occurring at Ungern Castle; could this not be some manifestation of "psychic residues" more or less directly connected to this whole affair?

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• *I Protocolli dei Savi Anziani di Sion. Italian version with appendix and introduction*

(La Vita Italiana, Rome).

The Italian translation of the famous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* published in 1921 by Dr. Giovanni Preziosi, editor of *Vita Italiana,* has just been reissued with an introduction by M.-J. Evola, who attempts to bring some order to the endless discussions to which this "text" has given and continues to give rise, by distinguishing between two different and not necessarily related questions: that of authenticity and that of "veracity," the latter of which, according to him, is actually the more important. Authenticity is hardly tenable, for numerous reasons that we will not examine here; in this regard, we will draw attention to a point that seems to be given insufficient consideration, and which is perhaps the most decisive: that a truly and seriously secret organization, whatever its nature, never leaves behind written documents. On the other hand, the "sources" from which many passages of the *Protocols* were borrowed almost verbatim were indicated: Maurice Joly's *Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu ,* a pamphlet directed against Napoleon III and published in Brussels in 1865, and the speech attributed to a rabbi of Prague in the novel *Biarritz,* published in 1868 by the German writer Hermann Goedsche under the pseudonym Sir John Retcliffe. There is yet another "source" which, to our knowledge, has never been mentioned: a novel entitled *Baron Jehova,* by Sidney Vigneaux, published in Paris in 1886, and dedicated, rather curiously, "to the very gentleman A. de Gobineau, author of *the Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races,* who entered Valhalla on October 13, 1882." It should also be noted that, according to an indication given in the *Memoirs of a Madwoman,* by Miss Hersilie Rouy, published by E. Le Normant des Varannes (Paris, 1886, pp. 308-309), Sidney Vigneaux was, like the latter, a friend of Dr. Henri Favre, whom we mentioned above; this is a strange story in which the name of Jules Favre also appears, which is found moreover mixed up in so many things of the same kind that it is difficult to see it as nothing more than a simple coincidence… In *Baron Jehova* (pp. 59 to 87) there is a so-called “Testament of Ybarzabal” which presents quite striking similarities with the *Protocols,* but with this remarkable peculiarity that the Jews appear there only as the instrument of execution of a plan which was neither conceived nor desired by them. Further similarities have been noted with the introduction to Alexandre Dumas's *Joseph Balsamo ,* although here there is no longer any mention of Jews, but rather of an imaginary Masonic assembly. We would add that this assembly is also related to the pseudo-Rosicrucian "Parliament" described, around the same time, by the American writer George Lippard in *Paul Ardenheim, the Monk of the Wissahickon,* a portion of which was reproduced by Dr. Swinburn Clymer in *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America.* There is no doubt that all these writings, in their more or less "fictionalized" form, ultimately draw their general inspiration from the same "current" of ideas, that their authors may approve or disapprove of these ideas, and that, moreover, according to their particular inclinations or prejudices, they interpret them in different ways.

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They wrongly attribute the origin to Jews, Freemasons, or others; the essential point in all this, ultimately, and what, one might say, constitutes its element of "truth," is the assertion that the entire orientation of the modern world corresponds to a "plan" established and imposed by some mysterious organization; we know what we ourselves think in this regard, and we have already explained ourselves often enough on the role of "counter-initiation" and its conscious or unconscious agents that we need not insist on it further. In truth, it was by no means necessary to be a "prophet" to perceive these things at the time when the *Protocols* were written, probably in 1901, nor even at the time when most of the other works we have just mentioned date back to, that is to say, around the middle of the 19th century; Even then, although they were less apparent than today, a somewhat perceptive observation was sufficient; but here we must make a remark that does not reflect well on the intelligence of our contemporaries: if someone is content to "honestly" state what he observes and what logically follows from it, no one believes it or even pays attention to it: if, on the contrary, he presents the same things as emanating from a fanciful organization, it immediately takes on the appearance of a "document" and, as such, sets everyone in motion: strange effect of the superstitions instilled in moderns by the all-too-famous "historical method" and which are also part of the suggestions indispensable to the accomplishment of the "plan" in question! It should also be noted that, according to the "fabrication" of the *Protocols* themselves, the organization that invents and propagates modern ideas, in order to achieve its ends of world domination, is perfectly aware of the falsity of these ideas: it is quite evident that, in fact, this must truly be the case, for it knows only too well what to expect in this regard; but then it seems that such an enterprise of deception cannot, in itself, be the true and sole aim it sets for itself, and this leads us to consider another point which, indicated by Mr. Evola in his introduction, was taken up and developed in the November issue of *Vita Italiana,* in an article signed "Arthos" and entitled *Transformazioni del "Regnum".* Indeed, the *Protocols* do not only present a "tactic" aimed at the destruction of the traditional world, which is its purely negative aspect and corresponds to the current phase of events; There is also the idea of the merely transitory nature of this phase, and that of the subsequent establishment of a supranational *Regnum ,* an idea which can be regarded as a distortion of that of the "Holy Empire" and other analogous traditional conceptions which, as the author of the article reminds us, we have expounded in *The King of the World.* To explain this fact, "Arthos" appeals to the deviations, even to the point of a veritable "subversion," which can be undergone by certain elements, authentically traditional in origin, which somehow survive themselves, when the "spirit" has withdrawn from them; and he cites, in support of this thesis, what we have recently said here about "psychic residues"; The considerations found elsewhere, concerning the successive phases of modern deviation and the possible constitution, as its final stage, of a veritable "counter-tradition," of which the denatured *Regnum* would be precisely the expression in the social order, may perhaps contribute to elucidating this aspect of the question more fully, which

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even completely apart from the special case of the *Protocols,* it is certainly not without a certain interest.

February 1938

• Alfred Dodd – *Shakespeare Creator of Freemasonry*

(Rider and Co., London).

The author of this book had already published, a few years ago, an edition of Shakespeare's sonnets aimed at reconstructing their original arrangement and proving that they are in fact the "personal" poems of Francis Bacon, who, according to him, was the son of Queen Elizabeth; moreover, Lord Saint Alban, that is to say, this same Bacon, was supposedly the author of the ritual of modern Freemasonry and its first Grand Master. Here, however, the identity of Shakespeare, which has given and continues to give rise to so much controversy, is no longer the issue; the aim is simply to show that he, whoever he may have been, introduced into his works, in a more or less hidden and sometimes quite cryptographic way, countless allusions to Freemasonry. In truth, there is nothing here that can surprise those who do not accept the overly "simplistic" opinion that Freemasonry was created from scratch at the beginning of the 18th century; not all of the author's "decipherings" are equally convincing, and, in particular, the initials, except where they clearly appear in groups forming abbreviations whose Masonic use is well known, can obviously always lend themselves to multiple more or less plausible interpretations; but, even setting aside these doubtful cases, there still seems to be enough to support the author's position on this part of his thesis.

Unfortunately, the situation is quite different regarding the excessive conclusions he draws from this, imagining that he has thereby discovered the "founder of modern Freemasonry." If Shakespeare, or the person known by that name, was a Freemason, he must necessarily have been an operative Freemason (which by no means implies a worker), because the founding of the Grand Lodge of England clearly marks the beginning, not of Freemasonry without any specific qualification, but of that "diminution," so to speak, which is speculative or modern Freemasonry. However, to understand this, one must not start from the peculiar preconceived notion that operative Freemasonry was something rather similar to the "trade unions" of our time, and that its members were solely concerned with "questions of wages and working hours"! The author clearly has no understanding whatsoever of medieval mentality and knowledge, and, moreover, he contradicts all historical facts when he asserts that operative Freemasonry ceased to exist as early as the 15th century, and consequently could not have had any continuity with speculative Freemasonry, even if the latter, according to his hypothesis, dates back to the end of the 16th century; we truly fail to see why certain edicts would have had more effect against Freemasonry in England than similar edicts did in France against the

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Fellowship; and besides, whether we like it or not, it is a fact that operative Lodges have always existed before and even after 1717. This way of looking at things leads to many other implausibilities: thus, the manuscripts of the *Old Charges* would be nothing but forgeries, fabricated by those who composed the ritual themselves, in order to mislead research and create the illusion of a non-existent lineage, concealing their true aim which would have been to revive the ancient mysteries in a modernized form; the author does not realize that this opinion, which amounts to denying the existence of a regular transmission and admitting in its place only a simple "ideal" reconstruction, would thereby deprive Freemasonry of any real initiatory value! Let us disregard his remarks concerning the "illiterate workers" who supposedly constituted the sole members of ancient operative Freemasonry, when, in reality, it always "accepted" members who were neither workers nor illiterate (in each of its Lodges, there was at least one cleric and one doctor required); moreover, how can the inability to read or write (which, taken literally and not symbolically, is of no importance from an initiatory point of view) possibly prevent one from learning and practicing a ritual that, precisely, was never to be committed to writing? It would seem, according to the author, that English builders of the Middle Ages did not even have any language at their disposal in which to express themselves! Even if it is true that the terms and phrases of the ritual, in its current form, bear the mark of Elizabeth's time, this in no way proves that it is not simply a new version made then of a much older ritual, and preserved as such thereafter because the language did not change very significantly from that time on; to claim that the ritual does not go back further is almost as if one wanted to maintain that the Bible also dates only from that same time, invoking in support of this assertion the style of the "authorized version", which some, by a curious coincidence, also attribute to Bacon, who, let us say in passing, would have had to live a very long time to be able to write all that is thus attributed to him… The author is perfectly right to think that "Masonic questions must be studied Masonically"; But that is precisely why he himself should have guarded above all against the essentially profane prejudice of "great men"; if Freemasonry is truly an initiatory organization, it cannot have been "invented" at a given moment, and its ritual cannot be the work of a specific individual (nor, of course, of any "committee" or group); that this individual is a famous and even "genius" writer, that changes absolutely nothing. To say that Shakespeare wouldn't have dared to include Masonic allusions in his plays if he hadn't been, as founder, above the obligation of secrecy, that's a very weak argument, especially considering that many others besides Shakespeare did the same, and even in a much less disguised way: the Masonic character of Mozart's The *Magic Flute ,* for example, is certainly much more apparent than that of The *Tempest…* Another point on which the author seems to be quite mistaken is the value of the knowledge that the founders of the Grand Lodge of England might have possessed; it's true that Anderson took care to conceal many things, and perhaps more "by order" than on his own initiative, but for purposes that certainly had nothing to do with initiation; and, if the

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The Grand Lodge truly kept certain secrets concerning the origin of Freemasonry; how can we explain that many historians, who were eminent members of it, displayed such complete ignorance in this regard? Moreover, two or three detailed remarks will further demonstrate how wrong it is not to be sufficiently wary of one's imagination (and perhaps also of certain "psychic" revelations, to which the previous work by the same author seemed to discreetly refer): thus, there is no reason to ask, regarding a passage from Anderson, "what degree makes an *Expert Brother ,"* as if this were something mysterious (and the author, moreover, has quite fanciful ideas about the higher degrees), because this expression *"Expert Brother"* was then simply used as a synonym for " *Fellow Craft" ;* the Fellow Craft was "expert" in the Latin sense of the word, while the Entered Apprentice was not yet so. The "young man of extraordinary talent" to whom Thomas De Quincey refers is not Shakespeare or Bacon, but, quite obviously, Valentin Andreae; and the letters *AL* and *AD,* which, followed by dates, appear on a piece of jewelry from the *Royal Arch,* were certainly not placed there to form the words *a lad,* which would apply to the "young man" in question; how can one, especially when one makes a sort of "specialty" of interpreting initials, not know that these letters mean nothing other *than Anno Lucis* and *Anno Domini ?* We could point out many other things of the same kind, but we believe it unnecessary to dwell on them further; let us only note once more that it is very difficult to know exactly what the author means by *Rosicrosse Masons ;* he speaks of it as a "literary society," which, even if secret, is something hardly initiatory; It is true that Freemasonry itself is for him only an "ethical system," which goes little further and is not of a much deeper order; and what to think of the seriousness of an organization that would have no greater secret to keep than that of the identity of its founder? It is certainly not by the name of any individual whatsoever, even if it were that of a "great man," that one will ever validly answer the question posed by a "word" that has been distorted in so many different ways, a question which, moreover, curiously enough, is read in Arabic even more clearly than in Hebrew: *Mâ el-Bannâ?*

March 1938

- **Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *The Nature of Buddhist Art***

(A. Townshend Johnson, Boston).

This is the separately published introduction to an important work on *The Wall Paintings of India, Central Asia and Ceylon,* in collaboration with Benjamin Rowland. The author shows that, to truly understand Buddhist art, and in particular representations of the Buddha, one must refer to conceptions that predate Buddhism itself, since they ultimately relate to

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Vedic sources and, therefore, to universal symbolism, common to all traditions.
The more or less heterodox application to which this has been put does not preclude the fact that, in principle, the historical birth of the Buddha represents the cosmic manifestation *of Agni,* and that his life can, in the same sense, be called "mythical," which is not to deny its reality, but on the contrary to highlight its essential meaning. The Buddha was initially represented only by footprints, or by symbols such as the tree or the wheel (and it is remarkable that, similarly, Christ was also represented for several centuries only by purely symbolic representations); how and why did an anthropomorphic image subsequently come to be accepted? This must be seen as a concession to the needs of a less intellectual era, where doctrinal understanding was already weakened; the "aids of contemplation," in order to be as effective as possible, must indeed be adapted to the conditions of each era. But it is also worth noting that the human image itself, here as in the case of Hindu "deities," is truly "anthropomorphic" only to a certain extent, in the sense that it is never "naturalistic" and always retains, above all and in every detail, an essentially symbolic character. This does not mean, however, that it is a "conventional" representation as modern thinkers imagine, for a symbol is by no means the product of human invention; "symbolism is a hieratic and metaphysical language, not a language determined by organic or psychological categories; its foundation lies in the analogical correspondence of all orders of reality, states of being, or levels of reference." The symbolic form is "revealed" and "seen" in the same sense that Vedic incantations were revealed and "heard," and there can be no fundamental distinction between vision and hearing, for what matters is not the kind of sensory medium employed, but the meaning that is somehow "embedded" in it. The properly "supernatural" element is an integral part of the image, as it is of narratives possessing "mythical" value, in the original sense of the word; in both cases, these are primarily means intended not to communicate, which is impossible, but to allow the "mystery" to be realized, something that neither a simple portrait nor a historical fact as such could obviously do.

It is therefore the very nature of symbolic art in general that inevitably escapes the "rationalist" viewpoint of moderns, just as, for the same reasons, the transcendent meaning of "miracles" and the "theophanic" character of the manifested world itself escapes it; man can only understand these things if he is both sensitive and spiritual, and if he realizes that "access to reality is not obtained by making a choice between matter and spirit assumed to be unrelated, but rather by seeing in material and sensible things a formal similarity of spiritual prototypes that the senses cannot directly reach"; this is "a reality considered at different levels of reference, or, if you prefer, different orders of reality, but which do not exclude each other."

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- **Father Victor Poucel – *Mystique of the Earth: I. Plea for the Body***

(Plon Bookstore, Paris).

It is interesting to note that, in this book, we find, applied to the specifically Catholic point of view, ideas that are quite closely related to those we have just seen expressed by MAK Coomaraswamy: what is essentially at issue here, in fact, is a restoration of the symbolic value of corporeal things, which medieval Catholicism knew well, but which moderns have forgotten, accustomed as they are to radically separating matter and spirit, following the distinctly anti-traditional conception that found its philosophical expression in Cartesian dualism. The author expressly states, from the outset, that, "if we could discern the true meaning of everything, the entire Universe with all that it contains would appear to us, in relation to truth, as a vast system of signs," and this is indeed the real foundation of all symbolism; He first applies this principle to the search for what might be called the "vestiges" of the spiritual order in the human body, considered successively, in the two parts of the work, from the dual perspective of what he designates as the "symbolism of forms" and the "liturgy of functions." It goes without saying that it would be impossible to exhaust such a subject, but rather to simply outline its multiple aspects, with the possibility of revisiting some of them later as the subject of other volumes, since this one is intended to have a sequel; but there is already, in fact, a wealth of extremely interesting insights, in themselves and perhaps even more so for the perspectives they can open up to those who reflect upon them. We only slightly regret that the considerations presented in the second part are generally less precise and often of a more "literary" character than those of the first; But we must acknowledge the great difficulty in presenting in this way concepts which, although perfectly "normal," or perhaps precisely for that reason, have become truly "extraordinary" in the eyes of our contemporaries, even Catholics, so utterly lacking is the traditional sense today. We cannot consider going into detail here about everything contained in this book; but we will point out more specifically, in the first part, what concerns the verticality of the human body and the different orders of bodily symmetry, in relation to the directions of space; The author touches on very important questions from the point of view of traditional symbolism, such as the complex issue of the relationship between right and left and their connection with ritual orientation (but we must point out incidentally that, contrary to what he thinks, the side on which traffic flows on roads is not itself an indifferent matter, being originally determined by traditional rules that are still perfectly conscious among certain Eastern peoples, and that apparent or real anomalies in this respect must also have their significance, just as in the case of ritual "circumambulations," whose meaning differs depending on whether they refer to a "polar" or "solar" symbolism, the distinction between these two symbolic modalities being, moreover, also the true "key" to the predominance

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(respective of the right or left depending on the country or era). We should also note that the author quite rightly insists, on many occasions, on the need to restore to words the fullness of their meaning, which they have so often lost: where today we see only simple "metaphors," there is in reality a whole profound symbolism; "we would rediscover, by going back in time, modes of concrete spirituality, formerly belonging to the human mentality"; "early Christian literature, in the most illustrious Fathers, abounds in symbolism, and the language of Catholic rituals is entirely within the context of the ancient mentality." What we cannot so completely approve of is a rather visible tendency, which, moreover, we have already encountered recently in many others, to exaggerate the scope of certain "psychic" phenomena; The author does sometimes express some reservations on this subject, but they do not go far enough, and he does not seem to be sufficiently wary of the dangers presented by the current spread of certain things of this kind; he does, however, foresee them, since he remarks that "it seems that there are in us, in our unconscious region, I know not what points of attraction, or aspiration, through which a foreign world is introduced," which is quite correct; but this does not prevent him from immediately afterwards, speaking of "the dowser who questions his pendulum just as he would a table-turning," from defending himself against "judging the process in itself condemnable"; without wishing in any way to assimilate his case to that of the too many "radiesthetic" clergymen, for his intellectual quality is certainly quite different, we allow ourselves to draw his full attention to this point, which has, especially in the present circumstances, such importance that it can never be stressed enough; and our readers know, from everything we have repeatedly explained, what makes it so particularly serious, in direct relation to the "post-materialist" developments, if we can say so, of the plan to subvert the modern world.

• André Lebey – *Lafayette or the Freemason Militant*

(Mercure Bookstore, Paris).

These two volumes constitute a highly conscientious and remarkably impartial study, not merely of a single man, as the title might suggest, but in reality of an entire era—a particularly turbulent and eventful one. The author is not one for whom history is merely a matter of curiosity and more or less futile erudition; on the contrary, he quite rightly believes that we must seek lessons for the present within it, and he laments that, particularly in France, so little is being learned from the lessons that should be drawn from it. But, ultimately, is it not natural and, in a way, logical that this should be the case in an era like ours, where a blind belief in "progress" encourages us to disdain the past rather than draw inspiration from it? He makes no attempt to conceal the weaknesses of his hero, who, having begun his life as a man of action, subsequently let slip almost every opportunity to act that presented itself to him, and who most often allowed himself to be carried along by events far more than he directed them; if this was so, it seems that it was primarily because political action demands too many compromises irreconcilable with

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fidelity to well-defined and firmly held convictions, and also because one must take into account the many contingencies that seem negligible to someone who clings to an overly "ideal" view of things. On the other hand, by his very honesty and sincerity, a man like Lafayette risked becoming all too easily the plaything of less scrupulous people; in fact, it appears quite clear that a Talleyrand and a Fouché "manipulated" him pretty much as they wished; and others, no doubt, by putting him forward, only thought of sheltering behind his name and profiting from the popularity that surrounded him. One might wonder if he hadn't come to realize this to some extent towards the end of his life, when he wrote a sentence like this: "It has been in my personal destiny, since the age of nineteen, to be a kind of type of certain doctrines, of a certain direction, which, without placing me above others, nevertheless keep me apart." A "type," a figure more "representative" than truly active, that is indeed what he was throughout his long career… Within Freemasonry itself, he never seems to have played such an important role, and it was still to the "type" that the honors bestowed upon him were addressed; If, on the other hand, the Carbonari placed him at the head of its High Sale, he behaved there as everywhere else, "always rallying to the majority, persuading himself that it took his views into account, which it even accepted at first, only to later twist or surpass them," which, moreover, is perhaps not such an exceptional case: how many apparent "leaders" could be said of whom the same could be said! Certain allusions to "equivocal forces, police and others, that act behind governments," also show that the author suspects the existence of many "underpinnings," while acknowledging that, unfortunately, he has never been able to know exactly, in a sure and precise way, what to make of this subject, on which, however, "it would be essential to be informed with certainty in order to correct politics and rid it of the abjection that undermines it by leading the world to ruin"; and, we would add; In fact, such an operation would be necessary today in all areas, and not just in politics…

- **Reginal Reynolds –** ***The White Sahibs in India, with a preface by Jawaharlal Nehru***

(Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd., London).

This long history of mercantile rapacity, sometimes based on cunning and sometimes on violence, which is that of British “imperialism” in India from the founding of *the East India Company* to the present day—that is, for more than three centuries—is truly quite edifying, all the more so because it was written, for the most part, from the accounts of the British themselves. We cannot elaborate here on a subject that is too far removed from the scope of our studies, but reading this book is recommended to all those who are naive enough to believe in the supposed “benefits” that modern Western civilization is supposed to bring to the peoples of the East; however tenacious their illusions may be.

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In this regard, it is still highly doubtful that they can withstand such an accumulation of precise facts established with undeniable evidence!

Upton **Sinclair – *How I Believe in God***

Translated from English by Henri Delgove and RN Raimbault. (Adyar Editions, Paris).

The author's "religious" conception, which we can only agree to call such on the condition of specifying that it is a simple "religiosity" and not religion properly speaking, this conception, we say, is, in essence, a rather typically American mixture of "idealism" and "pragmatism": he feels the need to believe in an "ideal," which is quite vague, and, at the same time, he wants this "ideal," which should be called "God" while admitting that he does not know what this one truly is, to "serve" him practically in all sorts of circumstances; It must serve him in particular, it seems, to heal himself when he is sick, because stories of "mental healings" and "healing religions" occupy a particularly important place in the book (we note in this regard that Émile Coué's "training" was perhaps not so different from that of Mrs. Baker Eddy as he believes, because, a fact he probably does not know, Émile Coué, before founding his own school of "autosuggestion", had been a disciple of Victor Segno and the American "mentalists", who have many points in common with *Christian Science).* By its "idealistic" aspect, this way of seeing things is clearly linked to what we have called "psychologism," because it is obvious that the value or effectiveness of an "ideal" as such can only be purely psychological (and moreover, he pushes this tendency to the point of wanting to explain psychologically, by assimilating them to simple suggestions, facts which belong to the domain of magic or sorcery); but, in addition, as happens too often today in such cases, there are also elements which fall under a rather suspect "psyche," since, in the end, it is mainly a matter of appealing to the "subconscious," in which the author is only following William James, his master in "pragmatism"; he is quite disposed to attribute a "spiritual" value to psychic phenomena such as telepathy and clairvoyance, which is a very unfortunate illusion; and one might even wonder if, ultimately, what he "deifies" is not simply his own subconscious… – There are some really bizarre language errors in the translation: for example, brain cells are actually "cerebral" cells, not "cervical" cells, which means neck cells; and "sectarian" is quite a lovely barbarism, apparently formed by a confusion of "sectarian" with "sectarian"!

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• Roger A. Lacombe – *The Decline of Individualism?*

(Denoël Publishers, Paris).

The author of this book, who is clearly imbued with all the "democratic," "humanitarian," and "progressive" illusions of our time, adopts an exclusively social, even political, point of view (the characteristic way in which he uses the word "fascism" would be enough in itself to show that he is not exempt from a certain partisan spirit); thus, the "individualism" he wants to defend is simply opposed to certain "statist" and "communist" conceptions which, for us, are no less individualistic, since the collective certainly has nothing transcendent about it compared to the individual domain; all of this is situated exactly on the same plane, and we confess that the struggle between these various more or less "advanced" products of the modern Western mind can only leave us quite indifferent.

What is more curious is that the author, moving from one meaning of the word to another without seeming to realize it, ends up in places also making an apology for religious and philosophical individualism, which is indeed individualism in the true sense of the term, that is to say, a negation of everything that goes beyond the individual order; on this point, he would undoubtedly be in perfect agreement with the adversaries he is fighting on another ground, and this is a rather good “illustration” of the current confusion… But where the confusion goes even further is in a chapter directed against “traditionalism”, and where he calls us into question, by citing The *Crisis of the Modern World,* in a way that shows that he has not understood our “position” at all; We deeply regret that he was unaware of what we wrote about the difference between "traditionalism" and the traditional spirit, because this would have prevented him from associating us with people with whom we can have nothing more in common than the conviction of the harmfulness of the ideas and tendencies constituting the specifically modern spirit, that is to say, in short, something purely negative; and need we say that some of those he names are in reality among our most relentless and irreconcilable "enemies"? At the very least he should have realized, for we have said it often enough and quite explicitly, that tradition, in the essentially "superhuman" sense in which we understand it (and that is precisely why individualism is anti-traditional), has absolutely nothing to do with any "habits" or "customs" whatsoever, for which we certainly do not feel any more respect than he does, although for very different reasons; there is an assimilation here, between us and certain "traditionalists", which we cannot let pass without protesting energetically, if only out of concern for the truth alone.

As for his "historicist" attack on the very idea of primordial tradition, and his assertion that it is only "for lack of historical documents" that one cannot determine whether certain traditional doctrines are "the product of an individualistic movement" (!), anyone even slightly familiar with the "timeless" perspective we adopt, and consequently the utter insignificance of such a "criterion," will surely smile at it; and, in fact, we are not displeased to be provided from time to time with such a complete and brilliant, albeit unintentional, justification for all that we have written about the special mentality that is

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that of most of our contemporaries! Let us add further that it is not we, in any case, who have ever spoken of "traditional beliefs", nor of "metaphysical beliefs" *(sic) ;* this last expression is even perfectly incomprehensible to us; tradition and metaphysics, as we consider them, are a matter, not of feeling, but of pure knowledge, and the rest does not interest us, including the "ideal values" for which the author is so easily enthusiastic, and to which we formally deny, for our part, any character of "spirituality"; We are certainly much more "positive" than he is, and we ask him to believe that we, who are no more in solidarity with "traditionalists" than with any other Western and "secular" category, have no "misunderstanding of individualism," but quite the contrary, a very accurate appreciation, because based on higher principles, of what it truly is, and which his own illusions unfortunately prevent him from realizing. It would, moreover, be superfluous to dwell on this further; we have never intended to address ourselves except to those who have "eyes to see and ears to hear," and not to those whom certain prejudices and "beliefs" seem to blind irremediably. But why is it that these people, academic philosophers, orientalists or others, so often get involved in talking about things that escape their understanding and thus force us into the unpleasant task of correcting the errors and confusions that they inevitably make?

April 1938

• E. Gautheron – *Masonic Lodges in the Haute-Loire*

(Éditions de la Main de Bronze, Le Puy).

This volume is, as the author states, "both a page of local history and a contribution to the history of Freemasonry in France"; moreover, it is almost exclusively "documentary," so much so that it is only in the conclusion that a certain anti-Masonic tendency can be discerned. In fact, the documents published within offer nothing unexpected or particularly important; this is not to say, however, that they are without interest, for they at least introduce us to some rather curious figures in various respects. The author has a somewhat simplistic view of the origins of Freemasonry: the builders of the Middle Ages constituted something quite different from a mere association "for protection and mutual aid"; furthermore, there have always been "accepted" Freemasons, who were by no means "false Freemasons," nor individuals seeking to conceal any political activity whatsoever. The preponderance acquired by these non-professional elements in some Lodges made possible the "speculative" degeneration, but their very existence was neither a new nor abnormal fact.

On the other hand, we must point out at least one minor error: a "Lodge

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"Chapitrale" is not a Lodge "whose members can attain the grade of Rose-Croix," which any Mason can, but a Lodge on which, following a mode of organization moreover special to the Grand Orient of France, is "rooted" a Chapter of Rose-Croix, where members of other Lodges can also be received; elsewhere, the name "Sovereign Chapter" is found, undoubtedly due to a poorly deciphered abbreviation, transformed.

- **F. de Chatillon – *The Prophecies of Mr. Michel Nostradamus, Interpretation of about thirty quatrains***

(Marrimpouey Jeune, Pau).

The author of this pamphlet attempts to explain some of Nostradamus's predictions, especially those in which he believes he sees allusions to current events: the wars in Ethiopia, China, and Spain, as well as the League of Nations and the Soviets. His translation of many obscure words is certainly highly debatable, but overall, his interpretation is no more or less plausible than many others that have already been proposed; in fact, what is most curious about all this, in our opinion, is to see how much commentaries of this kind have proliferated recently…

- **Jean Fervan – *The End of Times, Collection of the principal sacred prophecies and predictions about our era and the "last days", followed by an inquiry into "the next king of France"***

(La Bourdonnais Publishing, Paris).

Yet another book devoted to the various predictions that are so fashionable at the moment, and whose dissemination, for reasons we have already alluded to quite often, unfortunately seems far from harmless; its author is, moreover, very likely one of those who recklessly throw themselves into all these dubious stories, without suspecting anything of their very dark "underpinnings", if they do not even refuse to admit them out of bias; they nevertheless contribute to propagating and maintaining a rather disturbing state of mind, especially in an era of imbalance like the one in which we live… In any case, the book starts rather badly, because its first chapter evokes once again the infamous "prophecies of the Great Pyramid", on which we have already had the opportunity to explain ourselves previously. Of all the prophecies discussed hereafter, only those drawn from the Bible, the Gospels, the Book of Revelation, and the *Vishnu Purana* are truly genuine ; but even then, one must know how to interpret them properly, and that is not so easy; it is especially when one attempts to correlate them with specific dates that fantasy is very likely to interfere. As for the rest, they are essentially only predictions, more or less suspect, often due to their very origin, the circumstances of their publication, and even more so because of the commentaries surrounding them; a particularly remarkable fact in this regard is the

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The obsession with the "Great Monarch" plays a considerable role in this, and we have been able to observe, on numerous occasions, its constant connection with all sorts of other things of a rather unfortunate nature. Since the opportunity presents itself, we will say that, in truth, we do not think that it is merely a pure and simple "invention"; rather, there is something there that actually relates to certain events that are to occur towards the end of the current cyclic period, but which has been entirely distorted by a specifically Western "perspective," and sometimes even a much narrower "local" one, since most of the "seers" and their interpreters are absolutely determined to make this "Great Monarch" a king of France, which amounts, in short, to assigning him only a very limited and purely "episodic" role in future history;

Authentic prophecies refer to events of a completely different magnitude… The volume ends with a rather curious appendix: it is a kind of “census,” so to speak, of all the possible “pretenders” to the throne of France, and their number is truly incredible; one even gets the impression that some of these royal genealogies must have been intentionally “scrambled,” just as was recently the case of the “survival” of Louis XVII, which, as we recently pointed out, is also invariably associated with the most troubling enigmas of the contemporary world; it would certainly take a great deal of naiveté to see, in certain chains of events, nothing more than simple “coincidences”!

- **Roger Duguet –** ***Around the Tiara, Essay on the prophecies concerning the succession of Popes from the 13th century to the end of time***

(Fernand Sorlot, Paris).

This posthumous work by Abbot Paul Boulin (the "Pierre Colmet" of the *RISS,* whom our readers will no doubt remember) deals with a subject that is partly the same as that of the previous book, but it presents it in a very different light: it is, in fact, a veritable "demolition" of the supposed "prophecies" concerning the Popes, the principal ones of which are attributed to Joachim of Fiore, Anselm of Marsico, Saint Malachy, and an anonymous "monk of Padua." The author perhaps even goes a little too far in this direction at times: for example, he treats the *Centuries* of Nostradamus rather lightly, where one nevertheless senses, beneath a mass of deliberate obscurity, a very clear echo of certain traditional sciences, even if they are only of a lesser order; But, if we must express reservations on this point, we readily concede to him, on the other hand, what he calls the "ramblings of commentators" (among whom, let us note in passing, was his own predecessor at the *RISS).* It is also difficult to admit that certain dubious "prophecies" were fabricated solely, or even primarily, to favor one or another candidate in a papal election, and that they reflect only rather base political intrigues, such as those arising from the rivalry between cardinals belonging to the Colonna and Orsini families; all this may have played the role of contributing factors, if you will, but there must have been

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Something else lies behind such contingencies; in fact, the author might not have denied it, and besides, he didn't pretend to elucidate everything, which would certainly be very difficult. Moreover, the movement of the Franciscan "spirituals," which he also sees as mixed up in all this, is not something whose character and history are perfectly clear; it would seem that various "currents," some orthodox and others deviant, were in conflict within it at certain times, hence the at least apparent inconsistencies. In any case, what seems most certain here is the "satirical" intention of many of these predictions, probably made after the fact, and of the figures that accompany them; As for the "occultist" (?) character that the author attributes to some of them, this point calls for another remark: it is not the alchemical or astrological symbolism that is disturbing, but only the use, or rather the abuse, that some have been able to make of it, more likely, moreover, during the Renaissance than during the Middle Ages.

It is indeed truly singular that, in the West, data that are authentically traditional in themselves have so often given rise to "sectarian" distortions, which at the very least imply an unfortunate confusion between entirely different domains; and this certainly does not simplify the task of those who wish to unravel certain historical enigmas! There are also, in this work, besides the actual study of "prophecies", many other things that are far from being without interest, for example, the author's curious recollections of Abbot Rigaux, parish priest of Argœuves, an enthusiastic commentator on Nostradamus, and who had been the confidant of Mélanie, the shepherdess of La Salette, "whose oracles unfortunately smelled of the faggot"; This strange character, who had in his possession, among many other rarities of this kind which he had patiently collected, a manuscript of the pseudo-prophecies of Joachim of Fiore and Anselm of Marsico which he explained in his own way, left disciples in whose eyes he appears as "inspired"; here, he appears, much less advantageously, as one of those "suggestioned" people, less rare than one would think, in whom naivety and cunning are mixed in proportions quite difficult to determine exactly. The author is even harsher on other defenders of the "Secret of La Salette," especially on Léon Bloy and his "converts," and on all "moon dreamers, from the 'Slaves of Mary' to the former 'Angels' of the anti-modern Thomist School, now lined up under the banners of the strange 'praetorians' of the Pontificate, all seasoned veterans of long campaigns against orthodoxy"... Already, *The White Tie,* whose publication preceded the death of "Roger Duguet" by only a very short time, had given us the impression that he had, in the end, come back from many illusions and weary of having been duped by people who, after having used him for a long time, had rewarded him very poorly; this posthumous work, which he himself presents as a "supreme testimony beyond which nothing matters to him anymore," can only confirm and reinforce this impression further; Let us be grateful to him for having wanted, before disappearing, to contribute to revealing certain "underlying" matters in which he had often found himself closely involved!

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May 1938

- **DS Sarma – *Lectures on the Bhagavad-Gita, with an English Translation of the Gita***

(N. Subba Rau Pantulu, Rajahmundry; Luzac and Co., London).

The *Bhagavad-Gita* has already been translated many times into Western languages, and also commented on from very diverse points of view, which, unfortunately, are not always strictly in accordance with the traditional spirit.

The present translation is at least free from the "tendentious" distortions found in both Orientalist and Theosophist translations, but it may not have all the desired precision; and this defect seems due above all to the concern to avoid as much as possible the use of "technical" terminology, which is not without disadvantages in such cases, since common language is necessarily vague and quite narrowly limited in its means of expression; there is also a kind of bias towards "simplification", which almost always leaves only the most external meaning, the understanding of which does not require any knowledge of the multiple traditional data of different kinds that are involved in the text. The six lectures preceding the translation further confirm this impression: addressing students more or less influenced by the modern spirit, the author has striven to make the teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gita "acceptable" to them,* which could hardly be done without diminishing them through many rather unfortunate concessions; does he not even go so far as to try, despite the doctrine of cycles which seems to cause him some difficulty in this regard, to reconcile these teachings with the idea of "progress"? Above all, there is an ambiguity that he has not been able to avoid: it is perfectly true that what is expounded in the *Bhagavad-Gita* is capable of being applied to all the actions that human existence entails; but this is on the condition of considering this existence in the traditional way, which confers on all things an authentically "sacred" character, and not under the profane aspect of "ordinary life" in the modern sense; There are two mutually exclusive conceptions here, and one can only return to the first by entirely rejecting the second and clearly recognizing it as the illegitimate deviation it truly is. Nothing could be further from the truth than to present the *shastras ,* or traditional treatises on the sciences and arts, as relating to "secular knowledge , " or to reduce the caste system to an attempt by mere "thinkers" to solve what are now called "social problems." We wonder whether the author himself truly pushes the misunderstanding to this point, or whether he merely intended to make the ancient Hindu "culture" (!) appealing to his overly modern audience!

This is not to say that there are not, in the course of his exposition, other more "orthodox" and more interesting views; but, in any case, the general intention of such an "adaptation" can only lead to a large-scale misunderstanding of the value and scope of everything that has the most profound character

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traditional, that is to say, of what is in reality all that is essential; and it is not by embarking on this path that it will ever be possible to react effectively against the degeneration of our time.

- **Mrs Rhys Davids - *To become or not to become (that is the question!), Episodes in the history of an Indian word***

(Luzac and Co., London).

It is only too true that grammarians, philologists, and translators have often done rather poor work, and that much could be done to rectify their shortcomings and errors; in this, we entirely agree with the author; but does this mean that we should also agree with her on the specific point at issue here, namely, concerning the verb *bhû* and its derivatives such as *bhava* and *bhavya,* in which, instead of the meaning of "to be" that is usually attributed to them, she wants to see almost exclusively that of "to become"? The truth seems to us somewhat different, and we do not think, moreover, that so much discussion and meticulous analysis is necessary to establish it: the two roots *as* and *bhû* are certainly not synonymous, but their relationship corresponds exactly to that of "essence" and "substance"; Strictly speaking, the word "being" should indeed be reserved for the translation of the first term and related terms, while the idea expressed by the second is properly that of "existence," understood by this as the sum total of all modifications that derive from *Prakriti.* It goes without saying that this idea of "existence" implies in some way that of "becoming," but also that it is not entirely reducible to it, for in the "substantial" aspect to which it refers, there is also the idea of "subsistence." Failing to take this into account, we wonder how one could possibly translate, for example, a term such as *swayambhû,* which certainly cannot mean anything other than "He who subsists by himself." Undoubtedly, modern language commonly confuses "being" and "existing," just as it confuses many other notions; But it is precisely confusions of this kind that we should strive to dispel above all, in order to restore to the words we use their proper and original meaning; in fact, we see no other way than this to improve translations, at least to the extent that the resources, however limited, of Western languages allow. Unfortunately, many preconceived ideas too often complicate even the simplest questions; thus, Mrs. Rhys Davids is clearly influenced by certain highly questionable conceptions, and it is not difficult to see why she is so attached to the word "becoming": it is because, in accordance with the theories of Mr. Bergson and other contemporary "evolutionary" philosophers, she considers "becoming" as more real than "being" itself, that is to say, she wants to make what is only a lesser reality, on the contrary, the highest and perhaps even the only reality; That she thinks this way for herself, certainly, is her own affair; but that she adapts the meaning of traditional texts to these thoroughly modern conceptions is something far more troubling. Moreover, her entire point of view is naturally affected by "historicism": she believes that such ideas have

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must have appeared at one time, then changed from one era to another, as if it were a simple profane "thought"; moreover, there is in it, as we have already had occasion to notice, an astonishing faculty of "imagining" history, so to speak, according to its own views; we even wonder if it is really only a matter of imagination, and, in truth, certain rather clear allusions to "psychic" experiences make us fear that there is something even worse there!

June 1938

- **Xavier Guichard – *Eleusis Alésia: An investigation into the origins of the European civilization***

(F. Paillart Printing House, Abbeville).

Whatever one may think of the views presented in this work, it is nonetheless fitting to pay tribute to the sheer amount of work it represents, to the patience and perseverance demonstrated by the author, who devoted to this research, for more than twenty years, all the leisure time afforded him by his professional duties. He thus studied all the places which, not only in France, but throughout Europe, bear a name that appears to be derived, sometimes in rather altered forms, from that *of Alesia ;* he found a considerable number of them, and he noted that all share certain common topographical features: they "occupy sites surrounded by more or less significant watercourses that isolate them as peninsulas," and they "all possess a mineral spring." From a "prehistoric" or at least "protohistoric" period, these "Alesian sites" were chosen, due to their strategic location, as "assembly places" (this would be the original meaning of the name by which they are named), and they soon became centers of habitation, a fact seemingly confirmed by the numerous remains generally discovered there. All of this, in short, is perfectly plausible and merely tends to show that, in the regions in question, what we call "civilization" dates back much further than is usually supposed, and without any real break in continuity since then. There might only be a few reservations to be made in this regard concerning certain assimilations of names: that *of Alesia* and *Eleusis* itself is not as obvious as the author seems to believe, and moreover, generally speaking, one might regret that some of the considerations he makes demonstrate insufficient or unreliable linguistic knowledge on many points; but, even leaving aside the more or less doubtful cases, there are still quite enough, especially in Western Europe, to justify what we have just said. It goes without saying, moreover, that the existence of this ancient "civilization" should not surprise us, whatever its origin and characteristics may have been; we will return to these latter questions later. – But there is something else, and it is apparently more extraordinary: the author has observed

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that the "Alesian places" were regularly arranged on certain lines radiating from a center and extending from one end of Europe to the other; he found twenty-four of these lines, which he calls "Alesian itineraries," and which all converge at Mont Poupet, near Alaise, in the Doubs. Besides this system of geodetic lines, there is even a second one, formed of a "meridian," an "equinoctial," and two "solstitials," whose center is at another point in the same "Alesia," marked by a locality bearing the name of Myon; and there are still series of "Alesian places" (some of which coincide with some of the preceding ones) marking lines that correspond exactly to degrees of longitude and latitude. All this forms a rather complex system, and in which, unfortunately, one cannot say that everything appears absolutely rigorous: thus, the twenty-four lines of the first system do not all form equal angles with each other; Moreover, a very slight error in direction at the starting point would be enough to produce a considerable discrepancy over a certain distance, which leaves a fairly large degree of "approximation"; there are also isolated "Alesian places" outside these lines, therefore exceptions or anomalies…

On the other hand, it is not clear what the special importance of the central "Alesia" could have been; it is possible that it actually had one, in a distant era, but it is nevertheless quite astonishing that no trace of it has remained thereafter, apart from a few "legends" which are in short nothing very exceptional, and which are attached to many other places; in any case, there is a question here which is not resolved, and which even, in the current state of things, is perhaps insoluble.

In any case, there is another, more serious objection, which the author does not seem to have considered, and which is as follows: on the one hand, as we have seen, the "Alesian places" are defined by certain conditions related to the natural configuration of the land; on the other hand, they are located on lines that were supposedly drawn artificially by people of a certain period; how can these two things of such a different order be reconciled? The "Alesian places" thus have, in a way, two distinct definitions, and it is unclear how they can be reconciled; this would at least require an explanation, and, in the absence of one, it must be acknowledged that there is something implausible about it. It would be different if it were said that most of the places representing the "Alesian" characteristics are naturally distributed along certain determined lines; This might seem strange, but it's not impossible in essence, because the world may well be much more "geometric" than we think; and, in that case, people would have simply had to recognize the existence of these lines and transform them into roads connecting their various "Alesian" settlements; if the lines in question are not a mere "cartographic" illusion, we can hardly see how they could be explained otherwise. – We have just spoken of roads, and this is indeed what is implied by the existence, on the "Alesian itineraries," of certain "distance markers," constituted by localities, most of which bear names such as Calais, Versailles, Myon, Millières; these localities are located at distances from the center that are exact multiples of a unit of measurement to which the author gives the conventional designation of "Alesian stadium"; And what is particularly remarkable is that this unit, which is said to have been the prototype of the Greek stadium, the Roman mile, and the Gallic league, is equal to one-sixth of a

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degree, from which it follows that the men who had determined its length must have known precisely the true dimensions of the Earth's sphere. In this regard, the author points to facts indicating that the knowledge possessed by geographers of "classical" antiquity, such as Strabo and Ptolemy, far from being the result of their own discoveries, represented only the remnants of a much older, even "prehistoric," science, most of which was then lost. What surprises us is that, despite observations of this kind, he accepts the "evolutionary" theories upon which all of "prehistory" as it is "officially" taught is built; whether he truly accepts them, or merely doesn't dare risk contradicting them, there is something in his attitude that is not perfectly logical and that greatly weakens his thesis. In reality, this aspect of the question could only be illuminated by the notion of traditional sciences, and this notion appears nowhere in this study, where one does not even find the slightest expression of suspicion that there could have existed a science whose origin was other than "empirical," and which did not form "gradually" through a long series of observations, by means of which man is supposed to have gradually emerged from a supposed "primitive" ignorance, which here is simply placed a little further back in the past than is commonly believed. – The same lack of any traditional data also affects, of course, the way in which the genesis of the "Alesian civilization" is considered: the truth is that all things, in the beginning and even much later, had a ritual and "sacred" character; There is therefore no need to ask whether "religious" influences (a rather inappropriate term, moreover) may have been exerted on this or that particular point, as this only reflects an overly modern perspective and sometimes even has the effect of completely reversing certain relationships. Thus, if we accept that the designation of the "Elysian Fields" is related to the names "Alesian" (which, incidentally, seems somewhat hypothetical), we should not conclude that the abode of the dead was conceived on the model of the inhabited places near which their bodies were buried, but rather, on the contrary, that these places themselves were chosen or arranged in accordance with the ritual requirements that governed this conception, and which certainly counted for much more than simple "utilitarian" concerns, if such concerns could even exist as such in times when human life was entirely governed by traditional knowledge.

On the other hand, it is possible that the "Elysian myths" were linked to "chthonic cults" (and what we have discussed regarding the symbolism of the cave would even explain their connection, in some cases, with initiatory "mysteries"), but it would still be necessary to further clarify the meaning attached to this assertion; in any case, the "Mother Goddess" was certainly something quite different from "Nature," unless by this one means *Natura naturans,* which is no longer at all a "naturalistic" conception. We must add that a predominance given to the "Mother Goddess" does not appear to be able to go back beyond the beginnings of the *Kali Yuga,* of which it would even be quite clearly characteristic; And this might allow us to "date" the "Alesian civilization" more precisely, that is to say, to determine the cyclical period to which it should be attributed: this is something that is certainly much earlier than "history" in the ordinary sense of the word, but which, despite this, is no less

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Already quite far removed from its true origins. – Finally, the author seems overly concerned with establishing that “European civilization” originated in Europe itself, without any intervention from foreign, and especially Eastern, influences; but, in truth, this is not precisely how the question should be posed. We know that the primary origin of tradition, and consequently of all “civilization,” was in reality Hyperborean, and not Eastern or Western; but, in the period in question, it is evident that a secondary current can be considered as having more directly given rise to this “Alesian civilization,” and, in fact, various indications might suggest, in this respect, the Atlantean current, during the period when it spread from West to East after the disappearance of Atlantis itself; this is, of course, only a simple suggestion, but one which, at the very least, would easily bring into line with traditional data everything that might be truly substantiated in the results of this research. In any case, there is no doubt that a question like that of the "Alesian places" could only be treated completely and accurately from the sole point of view of "sacred geography"; but it must be said that this is certainly, among the ancient traditional sciences, one of those whose reconstruction would currently give rise to the greatest difficulties, and perhaps even, on many points, to quite insurmountable difficulties; and, in the presence of certain enigmas which are encountered in this field, it is permissible to ask whether, even during periods when no notable cataclysm has occurred, the "figure" of the terrestrial world has not sometimes changed in very strange ways.

• St. Kramrisch – *A Survey of Painting in the Deccan*

(The India Society, London).

This volume is a history of painting in the Deccan from the time of Ajanta to the present day, that is, for nearly two thousand years, accompanied by numerous plates showing characteristic examples from the different periods. The most interesting part, from our perspective, is that which sets forth the principles of the earliest painting, that of the Ajanta type: it does not aim to represent space as perceived by the eye, but rather space as conceived in the painter's "mind"; thus, it cannot be interpreted in terms of either surface or depth; but the figures and objects "come forward," as it were, and take their form in this very movement, as if emerging from an undifferentiated "beyond" the corporeal world to reach their state of manifestation. The "multiple perspective" under which the objects are represented, the simultaneity of the different scenes, which is like a "multiple perspective" in time, and also the absence of shadows, are likewise characteristics of this mental space, by which it is distinguished from sensory space. Considerations on rhythm and its various modalities in this painting, on the *mudras* -like character that essentially characterizes all the movements of the figures, on the symbolic value of the colors, and on various other points, which we cannot even attempt to summarize, are no less worthy of interest; and the

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References to traditional texts clearly show the doctrinal and metaphysical basis on which such a conception of art is entirely founded.

• Shri Aurobindo – *The Mother*

(Arya Publishing House, Calcutta).

This small book deals with the divine *Shakti* and the attitude that those who strive for spiritual realization should have towards her; this attitude is defined as total "surrender," but one must not misunderstand the meaning to be attached to this word. Indeed, it is expressly stated from the outset that the collaboration of two powers is indispensable: "a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below, and a supreme Grace that responds from above," and, further on, that "as long as the lower nature is active (that is to say, in short, as long as individuality exists as such), the personal effort of the *Sadhakah* remains necessary." Under these conditions, it is evident that this cannot in any way be a question of an attitude of "passivity" like that of the mystics, nor, a fortiori, of any kind of "quietism." This "abandonment" is quite comparable, if not fundamentally identical, to what is called, in Islamic terms, *et-tawkîl ala 'Llah.* The final chapter, particularly important and interesting, sets forth the principal aspects of *Shakti* and their respective functions in relation to the manifested world.

• DV Fumet – *Our Sister Sorrow*

(Éditions du Seuil, Paris).

Under this Franciscan-inspired title, the author develops a series of reflections on the origin, role, and meaning of pain; he starts from the very accurate, and all too often forgotten, point of view that all things have symbolic value, by virtue of which "creation was like a graphic representation of the Spirit of God, like a relative seal of the Absolute"; but why does he fear being "accused of Platonism" for this, as if this were not, in essence, a view inherent in every traditional doctrine without exception? There are undoubtedly reservations to be made about the interpretation he gives of certain symbols, which is not always perfectly sound: thus, for example, we have never seen any reason to attribute a "satanic" character to the circle… As for the question of pain itself, it seems, if we understand the author's thought correctly, that it is primarily a matter of effecting, in a way, its "transmutation"; This is certainly much better than glorifying it in itself as is too often done in the West, where, in this respect as in so many others, there seems to be little awareness of the dangers that passivity in all its forms presents, because, ultimately, this exaltation of pain inevitably leads to encouraging passivity.

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- **P. Saintyves –** ***Popular Astrology, studied especially in the doctrines and traditions relating to the influence of the Moon: Essay on the method in the study of the folklore of opinions and beliefs***

(Émile Nourry Bookstore, Paris).

This posthumous work displays the qualities and shortcomings that are not only those of the author, but also, more generally, those of all folklorists: it is essential to distinguish, on the one hand, the patiently and conscientiously gathered collection of facts and documents, which represents undeniably valid and useful work in its own right, and, on the other hand, the interpretation and assessment given to them in accordance with an essentially "secular" and "rationalist" mentality. There is, however, something here that is certainly not without interest from our point of view: the author has been led to recognize that so-called "popular opinions" are in reality originally derived from a "learned" source; we would say, more precisely, that they are vestiges of an ancient traditional science, perhaps sometimes distorted or misunderstood, but of which they have nevertheless preserved certain elements that, without such "survivals," would have been completely lost in many cases. However, the value of this traditional science itself is completely misunderstood here, because its perspective and methods certainly have nothing in common with those of the modern sciences, which are generally considered the only ones worthy of consideration. Traditional science is even criticized for being founded on principles and not on simple experimental observations, which, incidentally, should put an end to the myth of the supposed "empiricism" of the ancients. What is truly curious is that the existence of facts consistent with this science is deliberately denied, as if this were incompatible with its primarily doctrinal nature. That knowledge has degenerated into "belief" because it has ceased to be understood, and that, in particular, there are confusions due to certain symbolic expressions being taken in a grossly literal sense by the ignorant, is quite certain. But what is no less remarkable is that "beliefs" constantly refuted by facts could not have persisted indefinitely throughout the centuries. It is also quite remarkable that everything related to the influence of the Moon has a knack for particularly arousing the fury of those who pride themselves on having a "scientific mind," in the sense we understand it today, and especially of "popularizers" (see, for example, Arago and Flammarion, some very characteristic quotations of whom can be found in this book). This is something that might seem surprising at first glance, since such a fierce attack on things that appear at least harmless is hardly easy to justify. But might there not be deeper reasons for this than one might think, reasons that are somehow connected to the very "tactics" of the anti-traditional mind?

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July 1938

• Swamî-Vivêkânanda – *Jnâna-Yoga*

Translated from English by Jean Herbert (Union des Imprimeries, Frameries, Belgium).

Most of our readers are probably already familiar with our opinion of Vivekananda and how he attempted to "adapt" Hindu doctrines, particularly *Vedanta,* to the Western mindset; they will therefore not be surprised that we have many reservations about a book such as this one, which is, in fact, a collection of lectures delivered to English and American audiences. This is certainly not to say that everything in it is without merit; but such works can only be read with great caution and are only safe for those capable of making the necessary "sorting" and discerning correct interpretations from those that are more or less distorted by unfortunate concessions to modern, "evolutionary," "rationalist," or other ideas. It is rather unpleasant to see, for example, someone claiming to speak on behalf of a tradition approvingly cite the theories of "scholars" on the origin of religion, or constantly rail against "superstitions" and "absurd stories of priests." Some may admire this as proof of "broad-mindedness," in the modern sense, but, faced with such an attitude, we can only ask ourselves this question: is this, with regard to traditional truths, ignorance or betrayal? In reality, there is clearly ignorance on certain points: for instance, Vivekananda himself admits that he "doesn't understand much" about the doctrine of the *deva-yana* and the *pitri-yana,* which is nevertheless of some importance; but, more often than not, one gets the impression that he was primarily concerned with presenting things in a way that would appeal to his "audience." He has, moreover, brought upon himself a curious posthumous punishment, if one can call it that: in the letter at the beginning of this volume, Mr. Romain Rolland declares that "the intuition of the Indian prophet *(sic)* had unknowingly joined the virile reason of the great interpreters of communism"; it is evident that Mr. Romain Rolland sees things through his particular "perspective" and that it would be wrong to take what he says literally; but, all the same, it is rather sad, when one has wanted to play the role of a "spiritual Master," to give pretext for such a comparison! In any case, if one examines the content of the book, one realizes that the title is somewhat misleading; for this, it is true, Vivekananda is not responsible, but the English publishers who have thus collected his lectures; these revolve around the subject, so to speak, rather than actually addressing it; There is much talk of "philosophy" and "reason"; but true knowledge *(Jnana)* is certainly not "philosophical," and *Jnana Yoga* is not rational speculation, but a supra-rational realization. Furthermore, it is almost unbelievable that a Hindu, while claiming to follow his tradition, could present it as being constituted by "the opinions of philosophers," which have passed through "successive stages," beginning with ideas

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"rudimentary" to arrive at increasingly "elevated" conceptions; wouldn't one think one was listening to an orientalist, and, without even mentioning the formal contradiction of these "progressive" views with the cyclic doctrine, what is being done here with the "non-human" character of the tradition? To take truths of different kinds for "opinions" that have replaced one another is a very serious error, and not the only one; there are also conceptions which, without being so false, are far too "simplistic" and insufficient, such as the assimilation of "Liberation" *(Moksha)* to a state of "freedom" in the vulgar sense of the philosophers, which doesn't go very far: these are things which, in reality, have no common measure... The idea of a "practical Vedantism" is also quite debatable: the traditional doctrine is not applicable to profane life as such; On the contrary, for it to be "practiced," there must be no profane life; and this implies many conditions not discussed here, beginning with the observance of those rites that Vivekananda affects to call "superstitions." Moreover, *Vedanta* is not something that was ever intended to be "preached," nor is it meant to be "made accessible to everyone"; and often, one gets the rather strong impression that this is precisely what the author set out to do… Furthermore, even the best parts generally remain quite vague, and the deliberate omission of almost all "technical" terms certainly contributes greatly to this, although the author's intellectual limitations are also a factor; there are things that cannot properly be called inaccurate, but which are expressed in such a way that nothing of their deeper meaning is apparent. We should also point out that there are some terminological errors which, because we cannot compare the translation with the English text, we do not know to which of the two they are attributable: thus, *manas* is not the "mind", *ahankâra* is not "selfishness", and *Âtmâ* is not the "Self", even if it is written with a capital letter; but we have said enough to show how far such a work is from being able to pass for an exposition of pure *Vedanta,* and everything else is only very secondary details compared to this essential consideration.

• Swamî-Vivêkânanda – *Karma-Yoga*

Translated from English by Jean Herbert (Union des Imprimeries, Frameries, Belgium).

This book is, on the whole, better than the previous one, no doubt because it deals less with questions of a purely doctrinal and intellectual nature; it is, if you will, a kind of commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gita,* which in truth only considers a very partial aspect of it, but which is, in short, acceptable within the limits it keeps itself; the idea of *swadharma,* that of "detachment" with regard to the results of action, are quite correctly expounded; but action should not be taken only under the too restricted meaning of "work", and, despite everything, the author's "moralizing" and "humanitarian" tendencies are sometimes a little too noticeable for one not to feel a certain unease, when one knows how foreign they are to the true spirit of Hindu doctrine.

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• Swamî-Vivêkânanda – *Bhakti-Yoga*

Translated from English by Lizelle Reymond and Jean Herbert (Union des Imprimeries, Frameries, Belgium).

This collection contains rather heterogeneous material, for the considerations on *Avatars,* the necessity of the *guru,* mantras , and *pratikas* (not *prâtikas* as it is mistakenly written) do not have a direct and specific connection with the path of *bhakti,* but in reality have a much broader scope; moreover, they are reduced here to very brief and rather superficial overviews. As for the very notion of *bhakti ,* ideas such as "love" and "renunciation" are perhaps insufficient to define it, especially if, as is the case here, one does not seek to connect them to its primary meaning, which is that of "participation." Furthermore, it is perhaps not entirely accurate to speak of the "simplicity" of *Bhakti Yoga,* since one recognizes that it is clearly distinct from the lower forms of *bhakti .* These may be for the "simple," but the same cannot be said of any *Yoga ;* and as for the aspiration toward any "ideal," this is no longer *bhakti,* not even the inferior kind, but pure childishness for the use of modern people who no longer have any real connection with any tradition. We must also note, as a minor error, the entirely erroneous translation of *para* and *apara* as "superior" and "inferior"; they can only be rendered as "supreme" and "non-supreme," which denotes a completely different relationship; and, given what these terms apply to, it is not difficult to understand that there is much more to this than a simple question of words.

• Swami-Vivekananda – *Raja Yoga or the conquest of Nature interior*

Translated from English by Jean Herbert (Union des Imprimeries, Frameries, Belgium).

In this volume, which, unlike the previous ones, was composed in this form by the author himself, we find some of the confusions that are prevalent in the West on this subject, but which one is surprised to encounter in an Oriental; we are referring to the false assimilations with "mysticism" and with "psychology"; in reality, it is to *bhakti* that one can link mysticism, provided that it is specified that these are only certain "exoteric" forms of *bhakti,* without any relation to *Yoga ;* as for psychology, it cannot in any way be a path leading to "Union", and indeed, in truth, it leads absolutely nowhere… In addition, the exposition is spoiled, in many places, by the unfortunate habit of seeking comparisons and parallels with modern science; This sometimes results in rather curious misunderstandings, such as trying to identify *chakras* and *nadis* with bodily organs. It is also strange that a Hindu could see *Hatha Yoga* as merely a kind of purely physiological "training"; either *Hatha Yoga* is a preparation for one of the forms of true *Yoga,* or it is nothing at all. The second part of the volume contains a rather free translation of the *Sutras* of Patanjali.

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accompanied by a commentary which, of course, represents only Vivekananda's interpretation; this, in general, corresponds only to a very external meaning, as it seems to strive to bring everything back to the "rational" level; did Vivekananda really believe that this was possible, or was he only afraid of offending Western prejudices by going further? It would be difficult to say, but, in any case, what is quite certain is that he had a strong tendency towards "popularization" and "proselytism", and that one can never give in to this tendency without the truth having to suffer... One could also make a very exact application here of the notion of *swadharma :* Vivekananda could have been a very remarkable man if he had fulfilled a function suitable to his nature as a Kshatriya, but the intellectual and spiritual role of a Brahmin was certainly not made for him.

• C. Kerneïz – *Yoga of the West*

(Adyar Editions, Paris).

This book, presented as a sequel to the same author's *Hatha-Yoga ,* which we discussed previously* , aims to adapt, for Western use, methods inspired by, or rather imitated from, those of *Yoga ;* we cannot say that it succeeds, for it is both false and dangerous. What is false, first of all, is the idea that *Yoga* is something independent of any connection to any tradition whatsoever; under these conditions, one can never practice anything other than "pseudo-rites" that will have no real, higher-order results, since no spiritual influence will be attached to them, and which can only have purely psychological effects of a rather disturbing nature.

What is no less false is the author's "idealist" and "subjectivist" viewpoint, which affects his entire interpretation. In principle, these are merely modern philosophical views that, whatever he may say, cannot possibly have the slightest connection with traditional doctrines. Does he not even go so far as to present as "postulates" of *Yoga* propositions whose substance is borrowed from Kant and Schopenhauer? The consequence of this viewpoint is that what is really at issue is, in essence, nothing more than a vulgar method of "autosuggestion." The author himself acknowledges this, but imagines that the results thus obtained are spiritually valid. The truth is that they are utterly worthless, even negative. Indeed, what those who attempt the exercises he prescribes will most certainly achieve is irremediable psychological damage.

All of this is accompanied by theories that are, to say the least, quite strange: there is, for example, a biological interpretation of "Adam" that Kabbalists would find very unexpected; there is also the infamous "pseudo-mystical" conception of the "androgynous" being created by the fusion of two different beings, which can only have the most sinister consequences. We will pass over

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* [January 1937: *Hatha Yoga, or the art of living according to mysterious India.]*

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the belief in reincarnation and other ideas that fall solely under the umbrella of common "occultism"; but we cannot avoid pausing on the paragraph devoted to the "provisional choice of a religion," for it contains truly astonishing confusions. First, it is not at all a question, as one might suppose, of choosing a traditional form to which one truly adheres, but only of adopting it "ideally," without any concern whatsoever for fulfilling the necessary conditions for actual admission; it is quite obvious that this is utterly futile, and, since it is added that "it is not a question of believing, but of acting as if one believed," we can only see this as a rather odious farce. Furthermore, it is advised to "leave aside dead formulas (?) and focus solely on esotericism"; Now, esotericism is something entirely different from religion, and besides, no one has the right to pick and choose, according to their fancy, among the constituent elements of a tradition: one must accept it in its entirety or abstain; we would like to see how someone who declared they wanted to adhere to "the Jewish religion reduced to Kabbalah" would be received in Judaism, for example! Finally, the last sentence of this paragraph deserves to be quoted: "Freemasonry can very well replace a religion, but by reducing it to the mystical Martinism from which it originated"; here, anyone with even the slightest notion of the history of Freemasonry and who knows even a little about what Martinism is will certainly not be able to help bursting out laughing! The author boasts, in his conclusion, of "bringing out of the Temple secrets that have always been jealously guarded there"; if he sincerely believes this, we can only pity him; In reality, he has "revealed" nothing else, alas! than his own illusions…

- **Gabriel Trarieux d'Egmont – *Life from Beyond the Grave***

(Adyar Editions, Paris).

In this book, devoted, as its title indicates, to the examination of data concerning the posthumous states of human beings, the most disparate things are rather unfortunately placed on the same level; authentic traditional doctrines, Swedenborg's very "mixed" visions, "metapsychic" experiences, modern occultist, theosophist and even spiritualist conceptions; it would be difficult to push the "eclecticism" any further… The author clearly has a robust faith in the "Masters" of the infamous "Great White Lodge", in the value of "clairvoyance", in "reincarnation", and also… in the coming "Age of Aquarius", and his conclusions strongly reflect this; that is to say, there is little to retain for those who have good reasons not to share such convictions and who are above all concerned not to confuse tradition with its counterfeits.

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• Raoul Marchais – *Mystery of Human Life*

(Adyar Editions, Paris).

In this book, too, the influence of modern science is strongly felt; but what the author seeks to combine it with are not genuinely traditional ideas, although he clearly believes them to be so in good faith. Indeed, while expressly declaring that he is not a theosophist, he takes very seriously, as an expression of "ancient wisdom," everything expounded in Madame Blavatsky 's The *Secret Doctrine .* It is this fantastic "cosmogony," with its evolutionary, and consequently already quite modern, distortion of cyclic doctrines, that he has endeavored to translate into a "philosophical-scientific" language that he considers more generally accessible. We would not, moreover, dare to guarantee that he has always perfectly recognized himself amidst all the complications of the "chains," the "rounds," the "races," and their multiple subdivisions. He also occasionally touches upon genuinely traditional notions, and he does so rather unfortunately: for example, he believes that the triad "Spirit-Life-Matter" is identical to the Christian Trinity, which proves that he is truly ill-informed on the subject. Furthermore, he has a completely "personal" and quite extraordinary way of "rectifying" astrology; but we believe it unnecessary to dwell on it further; all of this is undoubtedly very ingenious, but suffers from a complete lack of any real basis; and how much work is thus wasted in our time, for want of true guiding principles!

October 1938

• Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *Asian Art*

(The New Orient Society of America, Chicago).

In this booklet, whose aim is to indicate the spirit in which the study of Asian art should be approached if one wishes to truly understand it, the author again emphasizes the notion of traditional and normal art, and what distinguishes it from anomalous cases such as that of "classical" decadence and that of European art since the Renaissance. Furthermore, a supposedly "objective" study—that is to say, a purely external observation —cannot lead to anything in reality, for there is no true knowledge where there is no correspondence between the knower and the known. In the case of a work of art, it is therefore essential to know first and foremost what purpose it was intended for, and also what meaning it was meant to convey to the minds of those who viewed it. In this regard, it is essential to realize that the appearances presented by traditional art are not simply a reminder of visual perceptions, but the expression or sensory realization of a "contemplation" *(dhyana),* which is what the artist works through, and without which the

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The product of his work would not truly be a work of art. Finally, it is a mistake to think, as moderns generally do, that the repetition of transmitted formulas hinders the artist's own faculties, because the artist must have truly made these formulas his own through his understanding, which is also the only sense in which one can speak of "property" when it comes to ideas, and he "recreates" them in a way when, after assimilating them, he renders them in accordance with his own nature.

- **Prof. Leo Frobenius and Douglas C. Fox – *Prehistoric Rock Pictures in Europe and Africa, from material in the archives of the Research Institute for the Morphology of Civilization, Frankfurt-on-Main***

(The Museum of Modern Art, New York).

In this volume, published to coincide with an exhibition, what is of particular interest to us, apart from the numerous reproductions with which it is illustrated, is the history of the difficulties encountered in recognizing the first discoveries of prehistoric paintings, which the "scholars" obstinately denied for years because, in their eyes, no civilization, and consequently no art, could have existed in such distant times; this is a fine example of the strength of certain prejudices! The reason for these denials, in essence, is that "the Western mentality was imbued with the conviction that the culture of our time was the highest that man had ever attained, that older cultures could in no way be compared to the grandeur of modern scientific existence, and above all, that everything that had developed before the beginning of history could only be regarded as 'primitive' and insignificant in comparison to the splendor of the 19th century." One could not put it better; and, moreover, we do not believe that this mentality has changed much since then, even if, in certain particular cases such as the one in question, it has finally been forced to bow to all-too-undeniable evidence.

Leaving aside any question of "aesthetic" appreciation, the interpretation of these paintings, belonging to civilizations about which we have hardly any other data, is naturally very difficult, or even often quite impossible, except in cases where a ritual meaning can be guessed more or less completely.
Note that a figure found in the Libyan Desert bears a striking resemblance to a "Typhonian" representation from ancient Egypt; but, by a curious mistake, it is given as being that of the "god with the jackal's head", when, in reality, this is Anubis and not Set; in fact, it is, as clearly as possible, the "god with the donkey's head", whose presence from prehistoric times is quite interesting to note.

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• Jean Herbert – *Introduction to the Study of Hindu Yogas*

(Union of Printing Companies, Frameries, Belgium).

This lecture was given at the "International Institute of Psychagogy" in Geneva, and this may explain why the author initially defines the term *Yoga* as "meaning roughly a path that leads to a goal, a discipline that prepares us for something"; this is entirely inaccurate, since, meaning "Union," it actually designates the goal itself, and it is only by extension that it is also applied to the means of attaining it. On the other hand, the author is entirely right when he denounces the gross simplification by which Westerners consider the human being as composed of only two parts, the body and the mind, the latter indiscriminately encompassing for them everything that is not corporeal; but why does he reverse the normal meaning of the words "soul" and "spirit"? He clearly demonstrates the necessity of multiple paths, noting that one must consider not only the goal, which is singular, but also the starting point, which differs from person to person. He then briefly characterizes the principal types of *Yoga,* taking care to specify, quite rightly, that they are not mutually exclusive and that, in practice, they are always combined to some degree. It is also perfectly true that *Yoga* is not a "religion"; however, it should have been added that Hindu methods nonetheless possess, for the most part, a ritualistic character by which they are linked to a specific traditional form, outside of which they lose their effectiveness. To realize this, one would obviously have to disregard the teachings of Vivekananda… Finally, the author concludes his exposition with a warning against charlatans who seek to profit from a few ideas more or less vaguely inspired by *Yoga,* for ends that have absolutely nothing spiritual about them. In the present circumstances, such a warning is certainly not useless!

• L. Adams Beck – *From Kashmir to Tibet: Discovering Yoga*

Translated from the English by Jean Herbert and Pierre Sauvageot (Victor Editions) Attinger, Paris and Neuchâtel).

This novel, written with a clear sympathy for Eastern doctrines, may awaken some interest in them among those unfamiliar with them, and perhaps even lead them to undertake a more serious study. This is not to say that the way certain things are presented is always without flaws: for example, Hindu and Buddhist doctrines are sometimes intertwined in a highly improbable manner, which risks giving readers a rather unclear understanding of their relationship. What is entirely commendable, however, is that, contrary to what most often occurs in works of this kind, more or less extraordinary "phenomena" occupy only a very limited place, and their significance is kept in proper proportion; when they appear, they can be considered "signs," but nothing more. On the other hand, the very goal of *Yoga* is perhaps not indicated with sufficient clarity.

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To avoid any misunderstanding among those who are not already aware: it should have been shown more clearly that skill in an art, for example, can only be a completely secondary consequence, and at the same time, in certain cases, a kind of "support", provided that the spiritual orientation is maintained invariably; but, if it is taken as an end or if it is even simply sought for itself, it will become on the contrary an obstacle, and it will have in short, from this point of view, about the same disadvantages as "powers" of a stranger character in appearance, because, in the end, all of this always belongs to the same contingent order.

• J. Marquès-Rivière – *Hindu and Tibetan Tantric Yoga*

(Collection “Asia”, Librairie Véga, Paris).

What is striking at first glance about this small volume is the utter lack of care with which it was written and printed; it is literally teeming with errors of every kind, and unfortunately, it is not possible to mistake them all for mere typographical mistakes… As for the content, despite the claims of “direct information,” it is rather a compilation, since the most substantial part is clearly drawn primarily from Arthur Avalon’s *Serpent Power ,* and there are many other borrowings as well; some are not acknowledged, but we have good reason to recognize them; however, no doubt so as not to appear to be simply “copying,” the author has seen fit to substitute a peculiar assemblage of vague or inappropriate words for precise terminology. There is, moreover, a chapter on “reincarnation” from which it is absolutely impossible to deduce what the author thinks on this subject, which is certainly the best way to avoid displeasing anyone; Is it also to concerns of the same kind that we should attribute the curious restraints he takes in pointing out the fanciful nature of certain lucubrations of the late Leadbeater and a few others, or even a note that seems to admit the reality of spiritistic "communications"? We will not dwell on the usual "mystical" confusion, nor will we linger over certain more or less bizarre assertions, not all of which, moreover, concern Hindu or Tibetan doctrines, as evidenced by the designation of "blowers" given to alchemists, or the considerations on "Baphometic idols"... We wonder what exactly the author's aim could have been, unless, quite simply, he wanted to try to pique the curiosity of potential readers of the other works whose forthcoming publication he announces.

• Hélène de Callias – *Sound Magic*

(Éditions de Moly-Sabata, Isère; Librairie Véga, Paris).

The author rightly insists that "the vital element of music is rhythm" and on the incomprehension of modern Westerners in this regard, an incomprehension which, moreover, we should add, is not limited to the case of musical rhythm alone. We cannot examine the developments more closely here.

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The subject is indeed "techniques"; but we must express our regret that no distinction seems to be made between rhythms with beneficial and malevolent effects (certain African music is a particularly "current" example of the latter), and also that the entire action of sound is reduced to a purely "magical" point of view, which could only correspond to one of the lowest applications of the "science of rhythm." References to various traditional doctrines are often quite confused and drawn from unreliable sources; there are even some rather astonishing assertions, such as attributing the number five to the Sphinx, or the claim that "the priest says three masses on Christmas Eve"! This is a pity, because this work certainly stems from excellent intentions! But, unfortunately, the result is, on the whole, quite far from what one might have hoped for.

- **Paul Serres – *Man and Astral Energies (From Astrophysics to Astrology)***

(Editions Adyar, Paris).

The subtitle clearly defines the author's perspective: it is, once again, a matter of invoking considerations borrowed from modern science to support a traditional science, which, as such, manages perfectly well without such "justification." We have expressed our thoughts on this matter often enough not to elaborate further. It must also be acknowledged that, in the case of astrology, the rather lamentable state in which it has reached us explains many confusions and misunderstandings about its true nature. Thus, the author imagines that the "traditional rules" observed within it were established empirically; the truth is quite different, but one can indeed be misled, given the inconsistent way in which these rules are presented, and this because, in fact, what astrologers call their "tradition" is simply a collection of fragments gathered as best as possible at a time when the true tradition had already been largely lost. As for the "scientific astrology" of moderns, which is really only an empirical science, it has little left of astrology but the name; and the confusion of viewpoints sometimes leads to singular results, of which we have here a rather striking example: the author would like to establish a "heliocentric" astrology, which would be in accordance with current astronomical conceptions; he only forgets in this that astrology, considering exclusively cosmic influences in their specification in relation to the earth, must, by the same token, necessarily be "geocentric"!

- **Robert Duportail – *Scientific and Philosophical Connections***

(Montmartre Bibliophile, Paris).

The best part of this pamphlet is the chapter in which the author denounces the "regression of intelligence" and the harmful effects of the modern "scientific age"; he also offers a fairly good critique of "transformism." He is therefore among those who are more or less fully aware of the shortcomings

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of a purely materialistic "civilization"; but, like most of those in this situation, he can only offer remedies that are certainly quite inadequate. We do not quite see what results could be achieved in this regard by the constitution of what he calls a "psycho-philosophy," which he conceives as based essentially on the secular sciences, although he intends to incorporate some very fragmentary data drawn from alchemy or other "ancient sciences," and viewed, moreover, still through modern interpretations. Those who agree on the "negative" side seem to be growing in number, and that is already something; but, in order to do truly "constructive" work, one must first and foremost start from a knowledge of the true principles, without which one will never do much more than wave ideas around in a vacuum, which is certainly not the way out of the current "chaos."

November 1938

• Shri Aurobindo – *Lights on Yoga*

(Shrî Aurobindo Library, Howrah).

This book, composed of extracts from letters written by Sri Aurobindo to his disciples in response to their questions, clarifies how he envisions the path and goal of Yoga: for him, it is "not only about rising from ordinary, ignorant worldly consciousness to divine consciousness, but also about bringing down the supramental power of this divine consciousness into the ignorance of mind, life, and body, transforming them, manifesting the Divine here and now, and creating divine life in matter." In short, this means that the total realization of being encompasses not only the "Supreme," but also the "Non-Supreme," the two aspects of the unmanifest and the manifest ultimately uniting indissolubly, just as they are united in the Divine. Perhaps the author's insistence on highlighting this difference from "other *Yogas* " risks leading to an inaccurate interpretation; In fact, there is nothing "new" about this, since this teaching has always been that of the Hindu tradition, as well as of other traditions (Islamic *tasawwuf ,* in particular, is very explicit on this point). If, however, the first viewpoint generally seems more prominent than the second in *Yoga expositions,* there are several reasons for this of various kinds, which we may examine someday; suffice it here to note first that "ascent" must necessarily precede "descent," and second that the being who has truly realized the "Supreme Identity" can then, and by that very fact, "move at will" in all worlds (this excluding, of course, the possibility that, in the "descent," they would again find themselves confined within individual limitations). It is therefore, in any case, merely a question of "modality," and not a real difference in purpose, which would be utterly inconceivable; but it is worth emphasizing this point, too many

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People currently tend to see innovations where there is only a perfectly correct expression or a legitimate adaptation of traditional doctrines, and to attribute to individuals a role and importance they could not possibly have. Another point to note concerns the method of realization *(sadhana)* advocated by Sri Aurobindo: it proceeds, he says, "by aspiration, by concentration inward or upward, by openness to divine influence"; this is indeed the essential point in all cases, and one can only wonder whether, by appearing to dismiss means which, whatever their "accidental" nature, nonetheless constitute a significant aid, one is not increasing the difficulties of this realization, at least in most cases, since very few (especially in the conditions of our time) are those to whom the most direct path is immediately accessible. From this, we should not conclude that this path is unsuitable for some, but only that, alongside it, the other *margas* retain their full justification for those whose nature and aptitudes they are more closely aligned with. Moreover, exclusivity in method has never been in the spirit of any tradition, and certainly, no *Yogi* would dispute that the path he has followed and in which he guides his disciples is in reality one path among many, which, as we have stated elsewhere, in no way affects either the unity of the goal or that of the doctrine. We cannot dwell on points of detail, such as those relating to the distinction between the various elements of being; but we must express our regret that the terminology adopted there is not always as clear as one might wish: there is doubtless no objection in principle to the use of words such as *Overmind* and *Supermind,* for example, but, as they are not in common use, they would require an explanation; and, in fact, the simple indication of the corresponding Sanskrit terms would perhaps have been enough to remedy this deficiency.

- **Shri Aurobindo – *Basics of Yoga***

(Arya Publishing House, Calcutta).

This work, structured in the same way as the previous one, sheds considerable light on various points, particularly on the difficulties that may arise during the process of spiritual realization and how to overcome them. It especially emphasizes the necessity of mental calm (which should not be confused with "passivity") to achieve concentration and avoid being disturbed by superficial fluctuations of consciousness; indeed, the importance of these fluctuations should not be exaggerated, for "spiritual progress depends less on external conditions than on how we react to them inwardly." Equally necessary is "faith" (this, of course, refers to something quite different from mere "belief," contrary to what Westerners too often think), implying a firm and unwavering commitment of one's entire being; hence the inadequacy of simple theories, which require only purely mental adherence. We should also mention, among the other questions addressed, those of regulating desires and the lifestyle to follow in order to achieve self-control; it hardly needs to be said that we find none of the

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exaggerations which are prevalent in this regard in certain Western pseudo-initiatory schools, but, on the contrary, a warning against the error of taking mere means for an end. The last part of the book is devoted to the examination of the different degrees of consciousness, with the essential distinction of the "superconscious" and the "subconscious", which psychologists ignore, to insights into sleep and dreams and their different modalities, and to illness and the resistance that can be opposed to it internally. There are, in this last part, some passages which have such a close connection with what we ourselves have written about "psychologism" that it does not seem useless to quote them at some length: "Freud's psychoanalysis is the last thing that should be associated with *Yoga ;* It takes a certain part, the darkest, most dangerous, and most unhealthy part of nature, the lower vital subconscious, isolates some of its most morbid phenomena, and attributes to them an action out of all proportion with their true role in nature… I find it difficult to take these psychoanalysts seriously when they try to examine spiritual experience by the flickering light of their torches; perhaps it should be, however, for half-knowledge can be a great obstacle to the manifestation of truth.

This new psychology reminds me of children learning a rudimentary and incomplete alphabet, triumphantly confusing their “ABC” of the subconscious with the mysterious superconscious, and imagining that their first book of obscure rudiments is the very heart of true knowledge. They look from bottom to top and explain the higher lights by the lower obscurities; but the foundation of things is above and not below, in the superconscious and not in the subconscious… One must know the whole before one can know the part, and the higher before one can truly understand the lower. This is the promise of a greater psychology awaiting its moment, before which all these poor gropings will disappear and be reduced to nothing.” One could not be clearer, and we would very much like to know what the proponents of the false assimilations we have denounced on several occasions might think of it…

• Sri Aurobindo – *Insights on Yoga*

(Union of Printing Companies, Frameries, Belgium).

This is the French translation, which has just been published, of the first of the two volumes we mentioned above; this translation, moreover approved by the author, is very accurate on the whole, and we will only make one reservation: the word *mind* has been translated most often as "esprit", and sometimes also as "intellect", whereas it is in reality neither one nor the other, but rather the "mental" *(manas) ;* it has also been deemed useful, in some places, to indicate this in a note; would it not have been both simpler and more satisfactory to put the correct and exact term in the text itself?

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• **Shri Ramakrishna – *One of the paths…***

French adaptation by Marie Honegger-Durand; preface by Jean Herbert (Union des Imprimeries, Frameries, Belgium).

The title of this collection is explained by the first of the thoughts it contains: “There are paths that lead us to God through pure love, through study, through good works, through contemplation…; all these paths are different, but the Goal remains the same.” The concern for adapting to a Western audience does not seem to us to be without its drawbacks: to be able to do with complete certainty, as Mr. Jean Herbert says, “what Ramakrishna himself would have done had he spoken to French people,” one would have to have reached the same spiritual level as Ramakrishna… Therefore, there is sometimes a certain vagueness or inaccuracy in the expression; thus, to take just one typical example, why use the word “tolerance” when what is clearly meant is “patience,” which is quite different?
But, despite such imperfections, these thoughts remain highly worthy of meditation by those for whom Unity and Divine Presence are more than mere verbal formulas. – From the point of view of external presentation, we believe it might have been better to include a little more “substance” in this volume (one would certainly have been spoiled for choice), rather than inscribing only a single thought on each page, even if it occupied no more than two or three lines…

• **Shri Ramakrishna – *The Words of the Master***

Interviews collected and published by Swami Brahmananda. French translation by Marie Honegger-Durand, Dilip Kumar Roy and Jean Herbert; preface by Swami Yatiswarananda (Union des Imprimeries, Frameries, Belgium).

In this collection, the text has been followed much more faithfully than in the previous one, and the inclusion of a considerable number of original terms also contributes to a more accurate understanding (for example, without the word *sâdhana ,* one would be perplexed by such a clearly inadequate expression as "devotional exercises"); this difference will be evident in
comparing the versions of some passages that are found in both volumes.
Furthermore, the sayings of Ramakrishna collected here have been methodically grouped by one of his disciples according to their subject matter; it is naturally impossible to provide a summary or even an overview, and it is best to recommend the book to all those who might be interested. Moreover, one should not be misled by the apparent simplicity of the form, beneath which those with some traditional knowledge will often discover details of a much more "technical" nature than the average reader will find; but naturally, as with all teachings of this kind, each person grasps what they can, according to their own understanding, and in any case, it is never without benefit.

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- **D r René Allendy – *Dreams Explained***

(Gallimard, Paris).

This volume is a collection of examples of the psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams in their various aspects; it is certainly not likely to alter our opinion of this pseudo-symbolism, which too often risks becoming inverted symbolism. We have already explained this sufficiently and need not dwell on it again; we will only take this opportunity to point out the strange epigraph Freud placed as the title of his *Traumbedeutung,* which is, for psychoanalysts, the fundamental work on this subject: *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo ;* if this motto is not a genuine appeal to the "infernal powers," we wonder what meaning it could possibly have!

- **Raymond Christoflour – *Louis Le Cardonnel, pilgrim of the invisible***

(Plon, Paris).

Louis Le Cardonnel, priest and poet, led a remarkably eventful and diverse life, and his biography is interesting from perspectives other than that of literature. Psychic phenomena appear to have played a significant role in his life; this was, of course, evident in his case, the result of entirely natural and spontaneous faculties; but perhaps he, like so many others, had a tendency to attribute to them a somewhat excessive importance.

On a more intellectual level, his judgment does not always seem to have been perfectly sound, so much so that one may be surprised by the title of "doctor" generously bestowed upon him by his biographer; we need only cite as proof one sentence that directly concerns us: it appears that he "admired" us, but that he "watched us stray into pantheism"; if he truly read our works, which are quite explicit on this point, it must be assumed that he hardly understood them! Moreover, that is not all: from the same sentence, it follows that he associated us, in his admiration, even with occultists and theosophists, which is certainly not flattering to us; this is a very strange "eclecticism," which we certainly cannot share or even approve of to any degree, for numerous reasons that our readers know well, and which, coming from a priest, we find doubly deplorable; no doubt, alas, this is where we must see it! yet another "sign of the times"...

- **Oswald Wirth – *Who is Regular? Pure Freemasonry under the Grand Lodge system inaugurated in 1717***

(Symbolism Editions, Paris).

This volume is a collection of articles previously published in *Symbolism ;* we have already discussed most of these articles upon their initial publication, thus sparing us the need to revisit them in detail. It concerns the quarrel that divides the

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Anglo-Saxon Freemasonry and so-called "Latin" Freemasonry, and more specifically French Freemasonry; the author criticizes the former for not remaining faithful to "pure Freemasonry," so that the accusation of "irregularity" he levels against the latter should be turned against it. This "pure Freemasonry," for him, is, as is well known, essentially represented by Anderson's Constitutions; but this is precisely what should be contested if one wanted to place the question on its true ground: the authentic expression of "pure Freemasonry" can only be the *Old Charges* of operative Freemasonry, from which Anderson's Constitutions deviated significantly. That the Grand Lodge of England subsequently moved closer to them to a certain extent seems beyond doubt; But one cannot fault someone for correcting an error, even partially and belatedly (whether this error was intentional or unintentional, or rather partly both, is irrelevant here). However, French Freemasonry, for its part, has only exacerbated the same error; thus, starting from the same point, the two current adversaries have diverged ever further, which obviously makes it very difficult for them to reach an agreement. Ultimately, the only fault of the Grand Lodge of England, in this instance, is its failure to clearly acknowledge its true present position regarding Anderson's Constitutions, which would cut short any discussion by refuting the only argument raised against it with any semblance of merit; but could it do so without thereby admitting its own original flaw, which is in fact that of the entire system of Grand Lodges, that is to say, of speculative Freemasonry itself? And this admission, should she ever resign herself to it, should logically lead her to consider a complete restoration of the old operative tradition; but where are those who would currently be capable of accomplishing such a restoration? These few reflections, certainly quite far removed from the point of view of the author of the book that prompted them, sufficiently demonstrate the full difficulty of the question, a difficulty which, in short, stems primarily from the fact that neither party can say where "pure Freemasonry" truly lies, either because they are unaware of it, or because doing so would condemn themselves along with the opposing party, or obligate themselves to undertake a probably impossible task. In any case, as long as there is a stubborn refusal to go back beyond 1717 to rediscover the true principles, it is quite certain that a satisfactory solution will never be reached. It would also remain to be seen whether there is anyone who truly wants to succeed, and, unfortunately, the rather unrelated concerns to the initiatory point of view that are emerging in all this make one doubt it…

• H. de Vries de Heekelingen – *Jewish Pride*

(International Review of Secret Societies, Paris).

This book is too "political" in nature to allow for lengthy discussion, and we must limit ourselves to making a remark of much broader scope: namely, that what is called here "Jewish pride"
does not seem to us to represent something as exceptional as some would have us believe; fundamentally, is the attitude of the Jews towards the *Goyim* really so different from this

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what, for example, was the attitude of the Greeks towards the "Barbarians"? In principle, moreover, all cases of this kind can very well be explained by the need, in order to avoid any illegitimate mixing between various traditional forms, to strongly give the adherents of each of them the feeling of a difference between themselves and other men; Human nature being what it is, this difference is all too easily mistaken for superiority, at least by the common people who cannot know its true, profound reason, which inevitably leads to the degeneration of this feeling into a kind of pride, and it is even understandable that this should happen especially when it concerns a strictly "closed" community, such as the one for which the Jewish tradition is intended… But, in fact, why do we not speak of "European pride", which is certainly the most insolent of all, and which, unlike the others, cannot find the slightest justification or excuse in considerations of a traditional nature? – We will only add one observation on a point of detail: the author mistakenly believes (and he is certainly not alone in this!) that the “Seal of Solomon” (also called the “Shield of David,” but not the “Seal of David” as he states) is a specifically Jewish symbol, whereas, in reality, it belongs just as much to Islam and even to Christian Hermeticism as to Judaism. He notes, in this regard, that in the arms of the city of Privas, three fleurs-de-lis were recently replaced by “three six-pointed Jewish stars ” ; we do not know if this is true, but, in any case, what he is certainly far from suspecting, and what makes the matter truly amusing, is that the two symbols are very close to being equivalent, both being constructed, like the Chi-Rho monogram, on one and the same geometric pattern, that of the six-spoked wheel; And this shows once again that we would do well to refrain from touching on certain issues when we do not possess at least some basic notions of symbolism!

December 1938

- **Sri Ramana Maharshi – *Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala***

Translated from the Tamil original (Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India).

We already spoke, when the first edition of the English translation was published, of these hymns addressed to the sacred mountain *of Arunachala,* considered to symbolize the "Heart of the World"; the second edition, which has just been published, has been greatly improved, both in terms of the correctness of the language and the accuracy of the expression; and, in addition, some comments which betrayed a certain influence of Western ideas have been happily rectified in a more traditional direction, and certainly more in line with the true thought of the author.

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• Sri Ramana Maharshi – *Upadesa Saram*

With English translation and notes by BV Narasimhaswami. (Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India.).

The Upadesa Saram is a summary, in thirty short stanzas, of Sri Ramana's teaching on the spiritual development of the human being; it defines the different "paths" *(mârgas)* and shows that they all tend toward the same goal, which is always, ultimately, "absorption into the source or heart of existence," which is identical to the Supreme Brahma. This permanent absorption implies the "extinction of the mind" *(manonâsha)* and, consequently, of individuality as such; but this "extinction," far from leaving a void, on the contrary brings forth a truly infinite "fullness" *(pûrna) ,* which is none other than the "Self," and which is the perfect unity of *Sat-Chit-Ananda ;* this is the ultimate result of the "search" *(vichâra)* for the true nature of being, corresponding to the "Thou art That" *(Tat twam asi)* of the Upanishads.

• Sri Ramana Maharshi – *Who am I?*

Translated by S. Seshu Iyer (Sri Ramanasramam Tiruvannamalai, South India).

This booklet contains the clarifications given by Sri Ramana, in response to questions from one of his disciples, on the "path of inquiry" *(vichâramârga)* that he particularly advocates: the being who, seeking to know his true nature, asks himself what he really is, what constitutes his very essence, must realize first and foremost that he is not the body, nor the subtle form, nor the vital force *(prana),* nor the mind, nor even the sum of potentialities that subsist in an undifferentiated state during deep sleep; he can therefore only be identified with what remains after all these extraneous elements have been eliminated, that is, pure consciousness, which is *Sat-Chit-Ananda.* This is the "Self" *(Âtmâ),* which resides in the heart *(hridaya)* and is the sole source of all mental, vital, psychic, and bodily manifestations; It can be attained through concentration and meditation, and the state of "absorption" in this "Self" has nothing in common with the exercise of any psychic faculties or "powers," nor, we would add to prevent another all-too-common misinterpretation in the West, with a "psychological" state, since it is essentially beyond the mind. In fact, this is a path of *Jnana-Yoga* that is very explicitly indicated in the *Upanishads* themselves, and which could be described "technically" as a process of gradual absorption from the outside in, to the very center of being; it ultimately leads to the knowledge of the "Self" and the realization of one's true nature *(swarupa),* a realization which is Liberation *(Mukti).*

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- **Ramananda Swarnagiri – *Crumbs from His table***

(Sri KS Narayanaswami Iyer, Trichinopoly, South India).

This is the account of a series of conversations with Sri Ramana, in which the *vichâra* method we have just discussed is in a way "put into action", and where issues such as the "faith" *(shraddhâ)* which is necessary for the attainment of knowledge, the control of the mind and the difference that exists between its temporary stabilization *(manolaya)* and its permanent "extinction" *(manonâsha) are addressed,* the obstacles that stand in the way of the realization of the "Self" and that can be overcome by constant concentration, deep sleep and the different degrees of *samâdhi are discussed.* What seems most peculiar to Sri Ramana's teaching is his habitual insistence on undertaking the *vichâra method from the outset,* instead of stopping first at preliminary processes of bodily, psychic and mental "purification", although he nonetheless recognizes the necessity of these, and several of his principal disciples have moreover expressly declared that this direct method is not suitable for everyone; and, as the author points out, Sri Ramana never contested the legitimacy of other methods, but on the contrary, as we have seen above, he affirms that, more or less directly, they all lead to the same final goal.

- **K – *Sat-Darshana Bhashya and Talks with Maharshi, with forty verses in praise of Sri Ramana***

(Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India).

The conversations reported in the first part of this book also deal with subjects analogous to those we have just mentioned: the relations between the *vichâra* and the "Grace" which responds to it inwardly, the two movements operating in a sort of correlative way in opposite directions; the identity of the *Sad-guru* with the "Self"; the positive character of the state of "silence" *(mauna),* which should in no way be confused with simple inactivity; the abode of the "Self" in the center symbolically designated as the "heart"; the difference between *Siddhis* in the ordinary sense, "powers" sought for their own sake and which are only obstacles to realization, *Siddhis* occurring naturally and normally as contingent manifestations of a certain inner state, and the highest meaning of this same term *(Jnâna-siddhi)* which is the very realization of the "Self". The second part is an annotated translation of the *Sat-Darshana Bhashya,* which, originally written in Tamil by Sri Ramana, was rendered into Sanskrit by his disciple Vasishta Ganapati Muni, and which is, as its title indicates, a "discourse on the perception of truth": starting from the distinction between God, the manifested world, and the "soul" *(jiva),* the aim is to transcend this distinction in order to attain the Supreme Reality which, in its absolute "non-duality," is the source and support of all that exists; this Reality is the "Self," which appears when the "ego" and its limitations have vanished; the *jivanmukta,* having realized the "Self," is one with the Supreme, and its condition and mode of action are incomprehensible to the mind; this state of realization is always the same, whether attained in this life or in some other world, and there is no distinction of

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degrees in Deliverance, which is the conscious identity of the being with the supreme Truth.

- **BV Narasimha Swami – *Self Realization: Life and teachings of Ramana Maharshi***

(Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India).

This book is a biography of Sri Ramana: his sudden "vocation" at the age of seventeen, his retreat to Arunachala and the various difficulties he had to overcome to persevere there, his relationships with his disciples and the instructions he gave them, his treatment of animals, the description of life at the ashrama—all this certainly cannot be summarized in a few lines, and we can only recommend reading the book itself to those who wish to gain a somewhat complete understanding of the Maharshi's "personality." What seems particularly important to note is that, due to its "spontaneous" nature, Sri Ramana's realization represents a path that is, in a way, exceptional, and also that, undoubtedly because of this very fact, he seems to primarily exercise what one might call an "action of presence," for although he always readily answers questions put to him, one cannot say that he gives a formal, regular teaching. His disciples are extremely diverse in every respect, and he always leaves each one with the greatest freedom, which, it must be said, produces very different results depending on the individuals; but, all in all, is it not inevitable that each one will only reap the benefits that correspond to his own ability?

- **"Who" – *Mahâ Yoga, or the Upanishadic lore in the light of the teachings of Maharshi Ramana***

(The New Light Publishing House, Pudukotah, South India).

The author of this little book finds, not without reason, confirmation of the *Upanishads* ' doctrine in the life and teachings of Sri Ramana; but where his viewpoint may seem somewhat strange is when he declares that these teachings constitute, for the Maharshi's disciples, the authoritative "Revelation" above all else, and that the ancient doctrine is valid for them because of its agreement with these same teachings. There is a kind of reversal of relationships here that does not indicate a very accurate understanding of traditional orthodoxy. Therefore, we believe it is appropriate to leave the author alone with full responsibility for his interpretations, at least insofar as they are affected by a certain "modernism" and various poorly justified comparisons with Western philosophical and psychological concepts, which also reflect the same spirit. While acknowledging the other highly interesting aspects of his work, one may regret that the subject was not, on the whole, treated in a manner more consistent with the very doctrine to which it directly relates; and perhaps this is one of the less fortunate consequences of this lack of regular instruction in

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which we were alluding to earlier, and which does not allow us to give in such a case to the quality of "disciple", however highly claimed it may be, the fullness of its meaning.

January 1939

- **Frédéric Portal – *Symbolic colors in antiquity, the Middle Ages and modern times***

(Niclaus Publishers, Paris).

This book, which dates back exactly a century, had long been virtually impossible to find; its recent republication is all the more timely as it has remained, until now, at least in French, the only work dealing specifically with the symbolism of colors. Its interest lies not only in the detailed considerations and abundant documentation it contains on this subject; what is perhaps even more important is that it presents itself as the application of a fundamental idea whose scope, as the editors point out in their foreword, far exceeds the framework indicated by the title, and which is "the idea of a primordial and perfect Revelation deposited in the cradle of humanity and which gave birth to all the traditional doctrines that have nourished its spiritual life throughout the ages." This is what Portal himself affirms most clearly in his conclusion: “One great fact,” he says, “dominates the research I submit to the scholarly world: the unity of religion among men, and as proof, the meaning of symbolic colors, the same among all peoples and in all eras.” Furthermore, considering that every doctrine, in moving away from its original perfection, can only degrade and become increasingly materialistic, he distinguishes three successive stages in this degradation, and he posits three degrees in the meaning of symbols, which respectively constitute what he calls the “divine language,” the “sacred language,” and the “profane language.” The first, according to his initial definition, seems to him to be truly primitive and prior to the distinction between priesthood and kingship; the second “takes origin in the sanctuaries,” following the establishment of the priesthood proper;

Finally, the last is reduced to the mere "material expression of symbols," linked to the "idolatrous" degeneration resulting from the common people's incomprehension. However, there is some inconsistency in his application of these principles: it sometimes seems that what he attributes to the first "language" has a truly "priestly" character, while he includes in the second many things whose character could, on the contrary, be described as "royal," particularly everything concerning heraldry; and, moreover, not everything he calls "profane" is strictly so and does not correspond to the preceding definition; the distinction is nonetheless valid in itself, and it could be of interest, for

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Anyone wishing to undertake a new study on the same subject should approach it more rigorously. Another point particularly worthy of note is that the author has formally acknowledged and stated that symbols generally present two opposing meanings; this is what he calls the "rule of oppositions," and he provides numerous examples in the use made of the different colors he successively examines. As for the reservations that might be expressed regarding some of his interpretations, they stem primarily from two main reasons: one is insufficient or inaccurate information about Eastern doctrines, quite excusable, moreover, at the time the book was written; the other is a rather strong Swedenborgian influence, and, in matters of symbolism as in many other respects, Swedenborg is far from being a perfectly reliable guide. Despite these flaws, such a work, let us repeat, is nonetheless of the greatest interest, and even indispensable to all those who, for any reason whatsoever, are interested in the subject it deals with, since there is no other that can replace it.

- **G. Persigout – *Rosicrucianism and Cartesianism: "November 10, 1619", An Essay in Hermetic Exegesis of the Cartesian Dream***

(Publishing "La Paix", Paris).

This pamphlet, which is only a fragment of a larger work, relates to a question we already had occasion to discuss some time ago (April 1938 issue, pp. 155-156), in connection with an article by another author published in the *Mercure de France** *;* we therefore need not reiterate here all the reasons that render the hypothesis of Descartes' Rosicrucian initiation inadmissible. Moreover, the author of the present study is not as categorical as some others; at times, he even speaks only of a "Rosicrucian atmosphere" that existed in Germany at that time and by which Descartes might have been influenced at a certain point, the very moment when he had his famous dream; reduced to these proportions, the idea is certainly much less improbable, especially if one adds that this influence would have been, in short, only fleeting, and therefore very superficial. However, this would not explain why the different phases of the dream correspond to initiatory trials, since these are things that cannot be discovered through mere imagination, except in the reveries of occultists; but does such a correspondence truly exist? Despite all the ingenuity the author displays in his interpretations, we must say that it is not very striking, and even presents a regrettable gap, because, with the best will in the world, one really cannot see how the presentation of a melon can take the place of the water trial… It is highly unlikely, on the other hand, that this dream is merely a fiction, which would ultimately be more interesting, because it would show, at least in Descartes, a conscious symbolic intention, however imperfectly

* [Reviews of journal articles – On *The Dream of Descartes,* by Albert Shinz.]

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that he expressed it; in that case, he could have attempted in this form a disguised description of initiatory trials; but again, what initiation would it then be?
All that could be admitted at a stretch is that he was received, as Leibniz was later, into some organization of more or less Rosicrucian inspiration, from which he would have subsequently withdrawn (and the break, if that were the case, would even have had a rather violent character, judging by the tone of the dedication of "Polybius the Cosmopolitan"); It would still be necessary for such an organization to have already degenerated considerably to so lightly admit such unqualified candidates… But, all things considered, and for the reasons we have already explained, we continue to think that Descartes, whom it is indeed far too paradoxical to want to defend from the imputation of “rationalism”, probably only knew, in terms of Rosicrucian ideas, what could then circulate in the profane world, and that, if certain influences were exerted on him in another way, consciously or more probably unconsciously, the source from which they emanated was in reality something quite different from an authentic and legitimate initiation; is not the very place that his philosophy holds in the history of modern deviation a more than sufficient indication to justify such a suspicion?

February 1939

- **Mortimer J. Adler – *Saint Thomas and the Gentiles***

(Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, Wis.).

The author, a professor at the University of Chicago, studies the arguments that could be raised against those who, in a way, represent the equivalent of those to whom Saint Thomas Aquinas addressed himself when writing his *Summa contra Gentiles :* these are, first, the "scientists" or "positivists," who deny the very existence of a true philosophy, and second, what he calls the "systematists," who admit an irreducible plurality of philosophies, considering them equally valid only on the condition that they constitute coherent constructions in themselves. What is most interesting here, from our point of view, is the protest raised against the spirit of system; The author does not hesitate to reproach, even with much reason, certain Thomists for distorting the philosophy of Saint Thomas by presenting it as "a great system of thought," and he would even prefer to renounce the name "Thomism" because its form seems to suggest the idea of a special system, representing simply the particular conceptions of a certain individuality, that is to say, "a philosophy" among others, and not an expression of the *philosophia perennis ;* it is only regrettable that he does not seem to conceive of this *philosophia perennis* outside of its specifically Christian form, which, in reality, can only be one of the multiple expressions of the one truth.

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- **Albert Gleizes – *The Human Significance of Cubism***

(Moly-Sabata Publishing, Sablons, Isère).

This brochure is a reproduction of a lecture in which the author sought to demonstrate that Cubism, known primarily as an aesthetic manifestation, actually exerted an influence in a broader and more truly "human" sphere, firstly because it was "the work of a true painter, a manual craft," and secondly because it led the painter, in order to resolve certain difficulties, to reflect "not on external images, but on himself, on his natural tendencies, on what he wanted to do, on his active faculties." It was, therefore, for some at least, a starting point for research that would take them further, by "reintroducing, through the multiplicity of viewpoints (substituting for the unity of perspective), time into a human mode of expression, into an art that, it was claimed, did not include it," and by making it clear that "the geometric figure was a means and not an end." We will not dwell on the more strictly "technical" considerations, nor on the "rainbow" theory that the author has already expounded elsewhere; but we will point out, as particularly interesting, the idea that "cubism has forced us to modify the one-sided sensory notion that comes to us from the Renaissance," and thereby to move closer to the artistic conceptions of the Middle Ages, which can "revive a religious expression."

- **Georges Méautis – *The Book of Pythagorean Wisdom, translation and commentary on the Pythagorean Golden Verses***

(Dorbon Ainé, Paris).

One might wonder whether it was really necessary to translate the *Golden Verses* once again ; the truth is that the author, finding that the commentaries of Hierocles and Fabre d'Olivet "bear the marks of the era in which they were composed" (but the former at least is authentically Pythagorean), wanted above all to create another one that he considers better suited to our contemporaries, and this by drawing inspiration from "the secret tradition that has been perpetuated in a certain esoteric school"... which is none other, alas! than Theosophy; despite the reservations that could be made on many points, we still prefer Fabre d'Olivet!

March 1939

- **Ade de Bethune – *Work***

(John Stevens, Newport, Rhode Island).

The author examines the question of the nature and dignity of work from a Christian perspective, but one could say that these considerations are, for the most part,

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easily applicable to the traditional viewpoint in general; thus, the idea of the intrinsic value of work well done, because it conforms to the aptitudes of the one who does it, and this independently of its importance in itself, could be directly linked to the Hindu notion of *swadharma.* Work is "man's great vocation," and it contributes to making him the image of God, considered as the "Craftsman" par excellence; it hardly needs to be pointed out that this is, in essence, the very principle of initiations based on the practice of trades, whatever traditional form they may take. In this regard, let us note, as particularly interesting, the idea that man's relationship to the materials he uses corresponds analogously to God's relationship to man himself (and it is quite remarkable that the diagrams of these two relationships have been drawn according to the law of "reverse direction," although the text itself does not allude to this); Something similar is also always found, more or less explicitly, in the initiatory transposition we have just mentioned. If some, who too readily claim to rely on Christian doctrine to deny everything that goes beyond mere exotericism, would be so kind as to reflect a little on such similarities, it might perhaps contribute to seriously modifying their preconceived ideas, and to making them understand that the oppositions or incompatibilities they so boldly assert have no real existence and are simply a result of their own ignorance; but unfortunately, according to the proverbial expression, "there is none so deaf as he who will not hear"...

• Graham Carey – *Pattern*

(John Stevens, Newport, Rhode Island).

In the two lectures brought together here, and which are respectively entitled *Purpose and Pattern* and *Pattern and Appearance,* the author, after recalling the traditional conception of the nature of art, sets out to define the relationships existing between the "function" of a work of art, which is its relationship to the one who uses it, its "form" which is its relationship to the one who produces it by "materializing" in a way the idea or mental image which he must have conceived of it first, and finally its "figure", that is to say its external aspect, which is a realization of this ideal model, but necessarily conditioned both by the mental particularities of the artist himself and by the nature of the materials which he employs. We must particularly note what is said about the degeneration that leads from what the author calls "creative" art, where the purpose of the work and its model are perfectly suited to one another, to "decorative" art, where complications without "functional" utility are encountered. He explains this by a kind of need that an artist possessing a certain technical skill feels to add difficulties to their work for the pleasure of overcoming them. This explanation may be "psychologically" accurate, but it is nevertheless insufficient, because it does not account for the fact that ornamental motifs originate from symbols whose meaning has been forgotten. This implies that the existence of "decorative" art as such presupposes, in a civilization, the loss of certain traditional elements. In any case, for Mr. Graham Carey, degeneration does not

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does not stop at this stage, and it ultimately leads to "recreational" art, that is to say, art which is nothing more than a simple "game" aimed only at producing works devoid of any real utility; this is the specifically modern conception, and he has no difficulty in highlighting the lamentable results of this radical separation of the "beautiful" and the "useful" in the production of our time.

• Eric Gill – *Work and Culture*

(John Stevens, Newport, Rhode Island).

This is the lecture, published in a booklet in the same series as the two previous ones, which was first published in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts,* and which we have already discussed on this occasion in one of our recent reports* .

Shri **Aurobindo – *The Mother***

(Union of Printing Companies, Frameries, Belgium).

The French translation of *The Mother,* the last chapter of which was given here**, has just been published in a volume in the same collection *as Aperçus et Pensées* et *Lumières sur le Yoga,* which we have previously discussed*** ; we wish to bring this to the attention of those of our readers who would like to know the whole work.

April 1939

• R. Krishnaswami Aiyar – *Thoughts from the Gita*

(The Madras Law Journal Press, Mylapore, Madras).

Countless commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita have been written in our time,* but most of them fall far short of the traditional spirit; this is hardly surprising when it comes to the work of Orientalists. What is stranger, and in a sense more troubling, is that many contemporary Indian commentaries are themselves affected either by a more or less pronounced "modernism" or by political or social concerns that have led their authors to restrict or distort the meaning of the text in various ways. This book was written to counter these tendencies; and in particular,

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* [Reviews of journal articles, January 1939.]
** [November and December 1938.]
*** [October 1937.]

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Against those who would see the *Bhagavad-Gita* exclusively as a kind of treatise on *Karma-Yoga,* the author shows that it teaches very clearly that the three paths of *Karma,* Bhakti and *Jnana* do not in reality lead to *the* same point, that their respective predominance corresponds rather to so many successive degrees, and that it is only through *Jnana* that complete and final realization can be attained; there is obviously no "exclusivism" in favor of one path or another, but rather, on the contrary, the affirmation that each of them has its reason for being and is even necessary, provided that it is placed in the place that truly belongs to it. This progression is observed quite accurately throughout the entire exposition, which is written in very clear and as simple a language as possible—perhaps even a little too simple at times, since one should not be too afraid of using "technical" terms when ordinary language does not provide an equivalent, and indicating a greater number of Sanskrit words could certainly have contributed to increasing precision. We cannot, of course, give an overview of all the questions addressed in the book; we will limit ourselves to highlighting in particular what relates to the correspondence between the different conceptions of the Divinity, as so many increasingly profound "points of view," and the various stages of spiritual development, for we believe it would be difficult to find a more easily understandable and more completely satisfactory exposition than the one presented here.

- **R. Krishnaswami Aiyar – *Thoughts from the Eternal Law***

(The Madras Law Journal Press, Mylapore, Madras)

This book, conceived in the same spirit as the previous one, deals essentially, as the title indicates, with *Sanatana Dharma ;* and the author, distinguishing what relates to the different constituent elements of the human being, endeavors to show the true reasons for the various orders of prescriptions that correspond to them. He rightly denounces the profound ignorance displayed by those who misunderstand or reject these prescriptions, or some of them, solely because they are incapable of truly understanding them, and because they presumptuously believe that everything they do not know is worthless or even nonexistent; If some of those who currently claim to lead India were not virtually ignorant of Hindu tradition, they would not attack institutions such as the caste system as they do, and they would know that "untouchability" also has reasons inherent in the very nature of beings, reasons that no one has the power to abolish. The justification for the strictly ritual prescriptions, the use of *pratikas* or images representing divine aspects, among other things (and these are also among those most readily attacked by the so-called "reformers"), is also excellent; there are other points on which some reservations might be warranted, in that they are interpreted with a somewhat superficial "literalism," to the detriment of the symbolic meaning, which is both deeper and truer, but this flaw is only noticeable in a few passages that are not among the most important. As for the assertion of the "universal" nature of Hindu tradition,

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which some may be surprised by, it would only need to be illuminated by some more precise considerations; for us, this character must be explained by the fact that the Hindu tradition proceeds directly from the primordial tradition, and thereby represents it in some way; and it is the primordial tradition which truly constitutes the *Sanatana Dharma* in its very essence, all the rest being in short only an adaptation, moreover necessary, to the circumstances of time and place.

• Raïhana Tyabji – *The Soul of a Gopî*

Translation and preface by Lizelle Reymond (Union des Imprimeries, Frameries, Belgium).

This is, in the form of a short novel, the well-known story of Krishna and the *Gopis ;* the title might suggest an overly "psychological" interpretation, but in fact, this is not the case, and the true meaning emerges quite clearly. The *Gopis* represent individual beings who, through *Bhakti,* come to perceive the Divine to varying degrees; each believes, moreover, that the aspect she knows is the only true one, and that those who see other aspects are mistaken; but they must ultimately come to recognize, like Radha, the Divine in all its disguises, that is, in the countless appearances of the manifested world. It is interesting to note that the author is an Indian Muslim, which in no way prevents her from demonstrating a genuine understanding of the Hindu tradition. And can we not see precisely an application of what we have just said in the recognition of the one Truth under the multiple forms in which it takes on different forms in different traditions?

• L. Adams Beck – *At the Heart of Japan: Zenn, Mystical Loves*

Translated from the English by Jean Herbert and Pierre Sauvageot (Victor Editions) Attinger, Paris and Neuchâtel).

In this book, we find the same qualities as in the other novel by the same author that we discussed previously* , but also the same flaws, which, it must be said, even seem somewhat aggravated. The way in which Europeans are intermingled in these stories with certain Eastern circles may be acceptable once, an exception being not implausible in itself, but when it is repeated, it gives the impression of a rather artificial device; moreover, the consequences of this intervention are expressed here, as the title indicates, by "mystical loves" that are quite difficult to reconcile with the character of authentic *Zen .* On the other hand, the idea of drawing parallels between a traditional doctrine and the concepts of modern Western science, and of relying on the latter to make the former more palatable—an idea whose vanity we have so often denounced—plays a rather significant role here; we know, moreover, that it actually exists.

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* [October 1938.]

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among representatives of certain branches of contemporary Japanese Buddhism, where "modernism" is unfortunately rampant, we nevertheless want to believe that this is only the case in the most exoteric schools. There is even a rather curious contradiction: the author very rightly says that, "when one follows the disciplines of Asia, one does not go fishing for souls, nor does one engage in facile propaganda"; but this does not prevent him from attributing such propaganda to an initiatory organization, or one that should be such, and which he presents as preparing a kind of "missionary" to send to the West after having taught them not only European languages, but also the "scientific" language that appeals to Westerners. It is nonetheless true that, alongside all this, there are very interesting and accurate insights into the methods of spiritual development employed by *Zen,* as well as into how they are reflected in various characteristic aspects of Japanese civilization; It is still regrettable, however, that, as with *Yoga* in the other book, the results of "realization" do not appear very clearly, and that the author even seems to have a limited idea of it, restricted to a few very secondary points of view; but, despite everything, this can certainly encourage some to reflect and try to penetrate these things more deeply if they have the possibility within themselves.

- **C. Chevillon – *The true face of Freemasonry: Asceticism, apostolate, culture***

(Edition of the Initiatory Annals, P. Derain and L. Raclet Bookstore, Lyon).

The author of this pamphlet is dissatisfied with the current state of Freemasonry, or rather of Masonic organizations, and is among those who would like to find a remedy for their degeneration; unfortunately, it is very difficult to discover, in the reflections he offers on this subject, anything more or better than this good intention, which is certainly insufficient to achieve an effective result. We believe that, by "asceticism," one should properly understand, especially if one wishes to apply this word in the initiatory order, a method of spiritual development; but here, in fact, it is hardly a question of anything other than developing the "psychological faculties," considered according to their most commonplace "academic" classification: sensitivity, intelligence, will; it is understood that intelligence, in such a case, means only reason; What is more curious is that the author believes he can relate the will to the "world of pure ideas"... As for his idea of "apostolate," it seems to stem primarily from a confusion of "realization" with external action, which is as un-initiatory as can be; and, fundamentally, we see little difference between his social concerns and those whose intrusion into modern Freemasonry has largely contributed to producing the deviation he deplores. Finally, "culture"—that is to say, purely external education, conceived in a secular manner—has no connection whatsoever with the attainment of true knowledge; and, while it is certainly very good to say that "the Mason must acquire a sense of the Eternal," to give real value to this assertion, one must not remain at a level of more or less empty "verbalism," which may be "philosophical," but which reflects nothing of

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not truly initiatory, nor specifically Masonic, if we understand the latter word according to the traditional conception, and not according to what it represents for most of our contemporaries, including the vast majority of Freemasons themselves!

May 1939

• Swami Vivekananda – *Lectures on Bhakti-Yoga*

Translated from English by Lizelle Reymond and Jean Herbert (Union of Printing Houses, Frameries, Belgium).

The aim of this volume is to gather together various fragments scattered throughout Vivekananda's works which, although also relating to *Bhakti Yoga,* were not included in the book of the same title, a translation of which appeared previously in the same series. What is rather unusual is that it is impossible to know their exact origin: it is unclear whether they are actually separate lectures, or merely notes taken by other people during the same lectures; this is, however, of secondary importance, since, in any case, the two collections complement each other.

Naturally, the ideas presented in this volume would elicit the same reservations we expressed regarding the previous one; this is not to say, of course, that it does not still contain interesting insights, for example, on the necessity of the *guru* or on the use of symbols, matters which, moreover, are not particularly unique to the *Bhakti* path ; but all of this requires careful reading by those sufficiently discerning to distinguish what is merely a modernized "adaptation" from what truly reflects something of the traditional teaching. We will allow ourselves a small observation: since this book is intended to complement *Bhakti-Yoga,* why has the entire section entitled *Parâ-Bhakti been reproduced,* which, apart from the addition of a few notes, is entirely redundant with the section already found under the same title in the other volume?

• Sri Krishna Prem – *The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita*

(John M. Watkins, London).

The author of this new commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita* is of English origin, which, it must be admitted, is rather rare, except perhaps in a few places where certain distinctly Western prejudices against "priests" and "dogmas" are expressed, as well as a tendency to diminish the importance and value of rituals. From the same perspective, one might also regret a few references to theosophical works and "metapsychic" experiences; on the other hand, it goes without saying that we find the comparisons with Plotinus and

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Hermetic books, for these are indeed teachings which, though belonging to other traditional forms, are nonetheless authentically in accordance with the same spirit. Furthermore, the author resolutely refuses to take into account all the discussions of Orientalists, whose "incurably external method," which cannot lead to any true understanding, he quite rightly denounces.

Starting with the idea of explaining the meaning of the titles of the different chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita,* he was led to go far beyond this framework and comment on the entire *Bhagavad Gita* itself. His view is that it constitutes a true manual of *Yoga,* taking this word in its "total" sense, that is to say, as designating not one or another of the particular "paths" that also bear this name, but "the Path by which man unites his finite self with the Infinite," of which these various *Yogas* are but so many aspects; and "it is less a synthesis of these separate teachings than the original and undivided whole of which they represent partial formulations." This view seems entirely correct to us, and the book, filled with very interesting insights that we cannot attempt to summarize here, is certainly one of those, unfortunately all too rare, that one will not read without deriving real benefit.

• Paul Radin – *The Story of the American Indian*

(Liviright Publishing Corporation, New York).

This book aims to provide an overview of the ancient civilizations of the Americas, bringing together, in an easily accessible and even enjoyable format, information that until now had remained scattered across numerous specialized studies. What is most interesting, in our view, is the section on "myths" and rituals, for anyone familiar with traditional symbolism will find material for many significant parallels with what is found in other civilizations. Moreover, the author deserves credit for reporting the facts impartially, without distorting them by introducing the preconceived ideas prevalent among most "anthropologists." What relates to the origins is more hypothetical, and there is nothing surprising about that, because this question remains very obscure in many respects: according to the author's theory, everything would have had as its starting point a single civilization, that of the Maya, which would have gone on changing and as if degrading little by little as it extended towards the North on one side and towards the South on the other; this seems quite difficult to prove, especially in the absence of any somewhat reliable chronology, and the similarities and differences between the customs of the various peoples, invoked in support of this thesis, could certainly be interpreted in many other ways. This would, in any case, only postpone the difficulty, for the question would then remain: where did the Mayan civilization itself come from? As long as we limit ourselves to "secular" research methods, instead of referring to genuinely traditional accounts that are too easily dismissed as "legends" without seeking to delve deeper into their meaning, such a question will always remain unanswered. Moreover, if the approximate dates attributed to the Mayan civilization are to be accepted, it would certainly be far too recent to truly represent an "origin," but wouldn't there be...

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Instead of asking why "the period that plays the greatest role in the Mayan calendar is connected with a significant time prior to the very beginning of Mayan history"?

June 1939

- **E. Aroux –** ***Dante the heretic, revolutionary and socialist: Revelations of a Catholic about the Middle Ages***

(Niclaus Publishers, Paris).

It is an excellent idea to have republished Aroux's book on Dante, the original edition of which dates from 1854 and which, naturally, had long been unavailable. Aroux had the merit of being one of the first, along with Rossetti and around the same time, to point out the existence of an esoteric meaning in Dante's work; and, despite the considerable number of works published on this subject since then, especially in recent years, the documentation contained in his book has lost none of its value, and it will always be necessary to refer to it as a kind of indispensable introduction to more recent studies. It is, moreover, quite clear that Aroux's interpretation calls for many reservations and needs to be corrected on numerous points, beginning with the accusations made against Dante in the title itself. We have already explained, in **The Esotericism of Dante*,* what to make of the accusation of "heresy," which ultimately rests on a confusion between the two domains of exoteric and esoteric, or, if you prefer, initiatory and religious. Aroux, moreover, was clearly ignorant of the true nature of initiation; thus, he sees in the use of secret and symbolic language only a simple precaution intended to conceal what might have been dangerous to say openly, for he seems to conceive of initiatory organizations only as vulgar "secret societies" with more or less political tendencies, of which there were so many in the first half of the 19th century; the particular mentality of that era is undoubtedly also responsible for the rather paradoxical idea of making Dante, a defender of the concept of a universal monarchy, the "Holy Empire."

should have realized, a precursor of "socialism" and the revolutionary utopias of 1848. Another singular error is that according to which the initiatory organizations of the Middle Ages, transformed into "sects" through a misunderstanding of their true nature, supposedly had "rationalist" doctrines; not only is this an anachronism, but "rationalism," since its inception, has always been the most irreconcilable adversary and negation of all esotericism, and this is even one of the most essential parts of its role in the deviation of the modern world. Moreover, there is something in Aroux's attitude, let us note in passing, that gives a somewhat strange impression: it seems that his Catholic pronouncements "ring false" by their very exaggeration, so much so that one is tempted to wonder where his sympathies truly lay from both a religious and

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political, especially since the way he presents Dante essentially coincides with that of Rossetti, whose apparent tendencies were quite opposite; we do not claim to resolve this question, due to a lack of "biographical" information.
sufficient, and it is essentially of purely curious interest, since it is obvious that this does not affect the content of the book in any way. One might think that, after so many reservations, very little of it must remain; this would be quite inaccurate, for on the contrary, the entire documentary aspect remains, as we have said, and this is what matters most in a work of this kind: moreover, all those who possess certain traditional data can easily correct themselves and correctly "reinterpret" everything that has been distorted by the author's special "perspective," and this is indeed a task that is far from lacking in interest.

- **Alice Joly – *A Lyon Mystic and the Secrets of Franc-Masonry (1730-1824)***

(Protat Brothers, Mâcon).

This large volume is as complete a biography of Jean-Baptiste Willermoz as possible, meticulously researched and thoroughly documented, but not without its flaws, which are probably inevitable when one attempts, as is the case here, to study matters such as those addressed from a purely lay perspective. In this context, a mere superficial sympathy or a curiosity that leads to the pursuit of the smallest anecdotal details is certainly insufficient for achieving a true understanding. We admire the patience required to treat a subject in which one does not feel a deeper interest, but we confess that, rather than a mere accumulation of facts, we would prefer a more "synthetic" approach that allows one to grasp their meaning and also avoids many errors and confusions, some more serious than others. One of these confusions appears in the title itself, where Willermoz is defined as "mystic", whereas nothing of the sort emerges from what is presented in the book, and moreover the truth is that he was not at all; if he can be reproached for having seemed to abandon the Elus Coëns, it is not because he turned to mysticism like Saint-Martin, but only because he then became more actively interested in other initiatory organizations.

On the other hand, the author clearly lacks any "technical" knowledge of the subjects she discusses, leading to some curious misunderstandings: for example, she mistakes the various Masonic Rites for so many "societies"; she ignores the difference between a "Grand Lodge" and a "Grand Orient"; she calls the affiliation of a Lodge to the Strict Observance a "rectification," whereas, on the contrary, this term designates the modification undergone by the Lodges of the Strict Observance themselves when it ceased to exist as such and was replaced by what, precisely for this reason, was called (and is still called) the Rectified Scottish Rite, in the development of which Willermoz played a leading role. That said, we readily acknowledge that this work contains a wealth of information to which it will always be useful to refer when studying

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the organizations in which Willermoz played a role; but the most interesting part, in our opinion, concerns his interest in magnetism and the rather unfortunate consequences that resulted, for this was certainly not the happiest episode of his career. Moreover, there is something truly singular in this story, which calls for a broader reflection: whatever one may think of Mesmer's character, about which the most opposing opinions have been expressed, he seems to have been deliberately "created" to lead astray the Masonic organizations which, despite their lack of actual knowledge, were still working seriously and striving to reconnect with the true tradition; instead, the greater part of their activity was then absorbed by rather puerile experiments that had nothing initiatory about them, not to mention the ensuing unrest and dissensions. The "Society of Initiates" organized by Willermoz had no Masonic character in itself, but, due to the caliber of its members, it nonetheless exerted a kind of guiding influence on the Lodges of Lyon, and this influence was, ultimately, nothing more than that of somnambulists who were consulted there on all matters; how could one be surprised, under these conditions, that the results were lamentable? We have always thought that the famous "Unknown Agent" who dictated so many confused and often even completely unintelligible lucubrations was simply one of these somnambulists, and we remember having written as much here a number of years ago, regarding Mr. Willermoz's book.

Vulliaud* ; Ms. Joly provides confirmation that leaves no room for doubt, as she has succeeded in discovering the identity of the person in question: it is Mr.

me de Vallière, sister of the Commander of Monspey, through whom his messages were transmitted to Willermoz; if only because they provide the definitive solution to this enigma and thus put an end to certain "occult" legends, the author's research will certainly not have been in vain. – We will allow ourselves one more small, incidental remark: some proper names are distorted in a rather astonishing way; we are not referring to those of 18th- century figures, knowing how difficult their spelling is sometimes to establish accurately; but why, in the references, are Messrs. Vulliaud and Dermenghem consistently referred to as "Vuilland" and "Dermenghen"? This is not of paramount importance, no doubt, but, especially in the work of an "archivist," it is nonetheless a little awkward…

- **Dr Gérard Van Rijnbeerk – *A Thaumaturge in the 18th century: Martinès de Pasqually, his life, his work, his Order. Volume two.***

(P. Derain and L. Raclet, Lyon).

We examined at length the first volume of this work in its time; the second is work** essentially only a supplement that the author felt he should

* *[Regarding the "Rosicrucian Order of Lyon"* (January 1930).]
** *[The enigma of Martinès de Pasqually* (May to July 1936).]

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He added to it, based on some facts that came to his attention in the meantime; he took the opportunity to complete the bibliography, and included the full reproduction of Martinès's letters to Willermoz, which are currently held at the Lyon Library, and of which only more or less extensive fragments had been published until now. He cites the articles in which we discussed his book, but he seems to have scarcely understood our position, for he calls us "essayists," which is truly unbelievable, and he claims that we "strive to express original ideas and personal views," which is the exact opposite of our intentions and our rigorously traditional point of view.

He finds "astonishing" our remark that "the Rectified Scottish Rite is not a metamorphosis of the Elected Cohens, but rather a derivation of the Strict Observance"; yet this is the case, and anyone with the slightest idea of the history and constitution of Masonic Rites cannot have the slightest doubt about it; even if Willermoz, in writing the instructions for certain degrees, introduced ideas more or less inspired by the teachings of Martinès, this changes absolutely nothing about the lineage or the general character of the Rite in question; moreover, the Rectified Rite is by no means "Templar Freemasonry" as Mr. van Rijnberk says, since, on the contrary, one of the main points of the "rectification" consisted precisely in the repudiation of the Templar origin of Freemasonry.

A rather curious chapter is the one in which the author attempts to clarify the lineage of "Martinism," which, despite everything, remains quite obscure and doubtful on certain points; the question, apart from a purely historical perspective, does not have the importance that some wish to attribute to it, for it is quite clear, in any case, that what Saint-Martin might have had to transmit to his disciples, outside of any formally constituted organization, could in no way be considered as having the character of an initiation. Another interesting point concerns the meaning of the letters SI, most often interpreted as "Unknown Superior," and which in reality have served many purposes: we have already noted that they are notably the initials of the "Society of Independents" mentioned in The *Crocodile,* as well as of Willermoz's "Society of Initiates"; as Mr. van Rijnberk says, one could multiply similar examples. He himself notes that they are also the abbreviation for "Sovereign Judge," the title of the members of the "Sovereign Tribunal" of the Elected Coëns; we will add that, in another Rite of the same period, there was a degree of "Illuminated Sage," and that, in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite itself, there is that of "Intimate Secretary," which happens to be the sixth, which is quite a curious connection with the "six points" (and let us note in passing, for those fond of "coincidences," that, in the Strict Observance, the act of obedience to the "Unknown Superiors" was also in six points!); but why did these two letters enjoy such favor? The author is quite right to think that they owe it to their own symbolic value, which he also glimpsed by referring to one of Khunrath's plates; However, he forgot to distinguish between two related, but somewhat different, symbols: that of the "brazen serpent," which actually forms the letters ST (initials, also of "Sovereign").

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Tribunal"), and the one where the tree or staff around which the serpent is coiled is represented solely by a vertical axis; it is the latter that gives the letters SI, another form of which is found in the serpent and arrow that appear on the seal of Cagliostro. Since we have been led to speak of this question, we will add that, essentially, the letter S represents multiplicity and the letter I unity; it is evident that their respective correspondence with the serpent and the axial tree perfectly agrees with this meaning; and it is quite true that there is something here that "proceeds from a profound esotericism," far more profound and authentic than the "Holy Initiation"… of Martinism, which certainly has no more right to claim ownership of this ancient symbol than that of the number 6 and the Seal of Solomon!

January 1940

• Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *The Christian and Oriental or True Philosophy of Art*

A lecture given at Boston College, Newton, Massachusetts, in March 1939. (John Stevens, Newport, Rhode Island).

This brochure reproduces a lecture given at a Catholic university by our distinguished colleague; in it, he emphasizes the identity of all traditional conceptions of art, whether Western, and particularly Christian, or Eastern: it is, in fact, a truly "Catholic" doctrine in the original sense of the word, that is to say, universal. In this traditional view, there is no essential distinction between art and craft; anything well made and perfectly suited to its purpose is properly a work of art; there can be no question here of "play" or "aesthetic" pleasure, because "only the contemplative and active lives are considered human, and a life whose end is pleasure is subhuman."

Beauty resides in the work of art itself, insofar as it is perfect in accordance with its purpose: it is independent of the viewer's appreciation, who may or may not be qualified to recognize it; this is, in fact, a matter of knowledge or understanding, not of sensibility as modern thinkers would have it, and *ars sine scientia nihil.* A need is the primary cause of the production of a work of art; but this involves both spiritual and physical needs, for man, considered in his entirety, does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God, that is to say, by the ideas and principles that can be expressed by art; originally, there is no distinction between sacred and profane, all things are made in imitation of divine prototypes, and "what they signify is even more real than what they are in themselves." The contemplation of the ideal model must therefore necessarily precede the material realization of the work of art; only in this way does "art imitate nature in its mode of operation," that is to say, God himself in his mode of creation. By

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Conforming to the ideal model, the artist also expresses himself, but *sub specie aeternitatis,* and not in terms of his contingent individuality; hence, the anonymous character of works of art in traditional civilizations; and, from a complementary point of view, the representation of an individual is rather a "type".
than a physically lifelike portrait, because "man is represented by his function rather than by his appearance." As for symbolic representations of the Divinity, even when they are anthropomorphic, they should in no way be taken for "figurations"; an adequate knowledge of theology and cosmology is necessary to understand them, for they do not appeal to feeling, but are essentially "supports" for intellectual contemplation, and art, even the highest, is ultimately nothing more than a means subordinate to this end.

• Sri Ramana Maharshi – *A Catechism of Inquiry*

(Sriramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India).

This small volume is a translation of instructions given by Sri Ramana to one of his disciples to guide him in the search for the "Self," a search that should ultimately lead to the realization of the true nature of being. Since the "Self" is identical to the "Supreme," all worship of the "Supreme" is, in essence, nothing other than a form of the search for the "Self"; this search, whatever means it may be pursued, constitutes the only method that allows one to gradually remove all obstacles and attain "Liberation."

The essence of these teachings can be summarized in these words: "Realize perfect Bliss through constant meditation on the Self."

• Sri Ramana Maharshi – *A Catechism of Instruction*

(Sriramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India).

This other book was compiled by gathering the teachings given by Sri Ramana in response to questions posed by his disciples; the main subjects covered are: the essential characteristics of spiritual instruction *(upadêsha)* and the distinctive marks of the *Guru ;* the method of realization *(sâdhana)* with its various modes, and in particular the *vichâra-mârga,* that is, the search for the "Self" mentioned above; the "experience" *(anubhava),* that is, realization itself at its different stages; and finally, the character of the state of one who remains firmly established in Knowledge *(ârûdha-sthiti),* an immutable state which is that of complete identity or absorption in the "Self". We somewhat regret the use of the word "catechism" in the title of these two volumes (only the second of which, moreover, is written in the "catechetical" form of questions and answers), because, in the West, it will almost inevitably evoke the idea of a purely exoteric and even quite elementary teaching; there are thus "associations" which must be taken into account if one wants to avoid ambiguities, and which unfortunately, Orientals who write in Western languages do not always sufficiently distrust.

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• Sri Aurobindo – *The Foundations of Yoga*

Preceded by a study by Nolini Kanta Gupta on the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo (Union Printing Works, Frameries, Belgium).

We have already discussed the English edition of this book; we would therefore only need to mention the publication of this French translation, were it not for the introduction which, it must be said, is not without its reservations. First, when Sri Aurobindo himself says "our Yoga," this can be understood, in a perfectly legitimate sense, as referring to the Yoga he practices and teaches; but when others speak of "Shrî Aurobindo's Yoga," they sometimes do so in such a way that they seem to want to attribute ownership of it to him, or claim for him a kind of "copyright" on a particular form of Yoga, which is unacceptable, because we are dealing here with a domain where individualities do not count; Moreover, we want to believe that Sri Aurobindo himself is not responsible for this, and that it should be seen merely as the manifestation, on the part of some of his disciples, of a somewhat indiscreet and rather clumsy zeal. What is perhaps more serious is that the introduction in question is heavily influenced by "evolutionary" conceptions; we will quote only two or three characteristic sentences in this regard: "Until now, mortality has been the guiding principle of life on earth; it will be replaced by the consciousness of immortality. Evolution has been achieved through struggles and suffering; henceforth, it will be a spontaneous, harmonious, and happy blossoming… Man is already more than a million or two years old; it is high time for him to allow himself to be transformed into a being of a higher order." How can such claims be reconciled with the slightest notion of the traditional doctrine of cycles, and more particularly with the fact that we are currently in the darkest period of the *Kali Yuga ?*

• Sri Aurobindo – *The Synthesis of Yogas.* Volume I: *The Yoga of Divine Works* (Part One)

(Union of Printing Companies, Frameries, Belgium).

This work, which appeared in English in the journal *Arya* from 1914 to 1921, comprises four parts: 1. *The Yoga of Divine Works ;* 2. *The Yoga of Knowledge ;* 3. *The Yoga of Devotion ;* 4. *The Yoga of Perfection .* The present volume contains only the translation of the first six chapters, revised and expanded by the author. As the title and subtitles indicate, it is an overview in which the various forms of Yoga are brought together or combined to contribute to the perfection *(siddhi)* of "Integral Yoga," of which they are in reality only so many branches. The first part is devoted to *Karma Yoga.* The author, naturally, emphasizes primarily detachment from the fruits of one's actions, following the doctrine taught in the *Bhagavad Gita .* He presents this detachment primarily as "self-giving" and as "sacrifice," and this last word is perhaps somewhat ambiguous, because, in its proper sense, it essentially implies a ritual element that does not appear very clearly here, despite the allusion made to

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The "sacrifice of *Purusha* " is viewed as the "divine common action that was projected into this world at its beginning, as a symbol of the solidarity of the universe." Moreover, generally speaking, everything relating to the purely "technical" aspect of the question is somewhat left in the shadows; this may be intentional, but it nonetheless sometimes gives a certain impression of "vagueness" that risks disconcerting the average reader—that is, someone who lacks the necessary background to fill in the gaps.

On the other hand, one must also be careful not to be misled by the terminology used, as some words are taken in a sense quite different from their usual meaning; we are thinking in particular, in this regard, of the expression "psychic being," which the author seems to treat almost as a synonym for *jîvâtmâ ;* such a use of the word "psychic" is not only unusual, but also clearly contrary to its original meaning, and we truly fail to see how it could be justified. All this, of course, in no way diminishes the interest of the considerations presented in this book, even if it does not provide a complete overview of the subject, which would undoubtedly be impossible anyway; but these remarks show that it should not be read without some caution.

• Shri Aurobindo – *The Isha Upanishad*

(Union of Printing Companies, Frameries, Belgium.)

This volume contains the Sanskrit text and translation of *the Isha Upanishad,* followed by a commentary; it appeared in part in the French edition of the journal *Arya,* which ran for only a few issues, in 1914-1915; the translation of the original English, which remained unfinished at that time, was completed by Mr. Jean Herbert. The author, at the beginning of his commentary, observes that “the Upanishads, being intended to illuminate rather than to instruct, are composed for researchers already familiar, at least in general, with the ideas of the Vedic and Vedantic seers, and even possessing some personal experience of the realities to which they refer. Their authors therefore refrain from expressing the transitions of thought and from developing implicit or secondary notions… Only the conclusions are expressed, and the reasoning on which they rest remains implied; the words suggest it, but do not openly communicate it to the mind.” This is perfectly correct, and we also believe that there is something inherent in the very nature of the traditional teaching in question in this way of proceeding; Shri

Aurobindo, however, believes that "such a method is no longer applicable to modern thought"; but does the latter deserve concessions, when, as it is specifically modern, it shows itself too manifestly incapable of receiving and understanding any traditional teaching whatsoever?

One can certainly try to make the ideas more explicit, which is essentially the role and purpose of all commentary; but it is truly dangerous to try to "systematize" them, since one of the essential characteristics of metaphysical ideas is precisely that they cannot be subjected to any "systematization"; and, moreover, should one assume an "implied reasoning" in a text stating truths whose real source is purely intuitive? These observations

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The main criticisms concern the "arrangement" of the commentary in question: its division into different "movements of thought" (an expression which is, moreover, far from clear) may seem rather artificial, at least to those not exclusively accustomed to the use of the particular forms of "modern thought." However, these reservations aside, the various paragraphs of the commentary, taken in themselves and independently of the overly "rational" framework in which they have been placed, nonetheless contain a great number of very interesting insights, which cannot be read and pondered without profit, especially if one already possesses some knowledge of Hindu doctrine.

• J. Marquès-Rivière – *Hindu Tantric Magic Ritual: Yantra Chintâmani (The Jewel of Yantras)*

Translated into French for the first time and preceded by a study on Tantrism (collection “Asia”, Véga bookstore, Paris).

The author states that he "chose the title 'Tantric Magic' for lack of a more suitable name, although this text far surpasses the usual Western conception of magical science"; this is undoubtedly true, but nevertheless, setting aside the distortions of the word's meaning that stem solely from modern misunderstanding, it is indeed magic that is being discussed here, that is to say, a very real traditional science, albeit of a lower order. It is therefore a question of

This only concerns a secondary aspect of Tantrism, which, as we explained elsewhere, is primarily initiatory and therefore not at all "magical" in its essence, contrary to the mistaken idea sometimes held. It remains to be seen what interest should be attached to this magical aspect, and, for our part, we would prefer to see translators focus their efforts on texts of a more properly doctrinal nature. It is also important to note that such a ritual, with all that it entails, only has real value and efficacy for someone who is genuinely connected to the Hindu tradition. Under these conditions, its complete translation represents little more than a "curiosity," and a few examples would have sufficed to allow one to grasp the nature of the methods employed, which is the only truly interesting aspect in such a case. The introduction, in our opinion, is more important than the text itself, as it presents general views on Tantrism and Yantras . These views are partly inspired by the work of Arthur Avalon and partly by what the author himself saw and heard during a trip to India. It is regrettable that one also sometimes senses a certain influence of Western "sociological" theories. As in the author's previous works, there are also many oversights, some of which are quite peculiar: for example, *Vishwakarman* is transformed into *Viskraharman,* which may be a printing error, and, certainly not, *Marishi* is identified with *Maharishi,* when it is clearly the name of the Mahayana goddess *Marichi !*

It should also be noted that *Chintâmani,* translated far too vaguely as "jewel" (which only renders *mani),* is in reality the Hindu equivalent of the "philosopher's stone".

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- **C. Kerneïz – *Karma Yoga, or action in life according to Hindu wisdom***

(Editions Jules Tallandier, Paris).

This book is certainly more "inoffensive" than the same author's *Yoga of the West ,* which we discussed earlier* ; but this is not to say, despite its title, that it contains much more authentic "Hindu wisdom." On the contrary, we find in it all sorts of distinctly Western things: "reincarnationist" ideas, "moral" considerations in the most ordinary sense of the word, attempts to draw parallels with modern scientific theories, as well as with the inevitable psychoanalysis. To appreciate the author's level of competence regarding Hindu doctrines, one need only look, for example, at his more than fanciful interpretation of the symbolism of the monosyllable *Om* (which, for him, is composed of only two elements), or at the assimilation he claims to establish between *Ananda* and "sexuality"! Let us also point out a rather amusing misunderstanding: the Tibetan word *Bardo,* literally "between-two", is the designation of the "intermediate world" in other words the psychic domain; however, he believed that this word applied to "the human personality after death" or to the "disembodied entity", so that he speaks of the "fate of a *Bardo* ", of "communication between the *Bardo* and its entourage", and so on; however, he refers to the tradition of the *Bardo Thödol ;*
How then did he read it? These few examples seem quite sufficient to us, and we will not insist further; we pity the unfortunate readers who, having no idea of oriental doctrines, will accept with trust the "presentation" given to them in works of this kind!

February 1940

- **Arthur Edward Waite – *Shadows of Life and Thought. A retrospective review in the form of memoirs***

(Selwyn and Blount, London).

The author states that he did not intend to write an "autobiography" in the strict sense, but rather aimed to draw certain lessons from the research he had conducted and the experiences he had encountered throughout his life; this is indeed much better, but then one might wonder why there is such a display in this book of portraits of himself at different ages and of members of his family…
This obviously does not detract from the interest of the text, which, on the whole, quite effectively fulfills its stated intention; Mr. Waite appears in it as

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* [July 1938.]

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definitively, he was quite disillusioned with everything properly called "occultism," which we certainly understand all too well; but the disillusionment caused by reading certain books and especially by frequenting certain circles ultimately led him to adopt an attitude that can be characterized as rather "mystical," which no doubt explains his marked predilection for L.-Cl. de Saint-Martin. If this is so, the reason is most likely that, despite his numerous and varied "experiences" (always limited exclusively to the Western world), he never had the opportunity to come into contact with any authentic initiation, with the sole exception of Masonic initiation; on this latter, moreover, he formed rather particular ideas, to which we expect to return soon in connection with another of his works. – Alongside some very valid criticisms, he demonstrates, with regard to certain organizations of dubious character, an indulgence that one might sometimes find a little excessive; But perhaps, judging by what he says in his foreword, he found himself obliged to soften things more than he would have liked, to take into account certain fears of his publishers… Nevertheless, he provides some curious details, for example on the *Golden Dawn,* whose rather confused history he does not, however, manage to completely clarify; it is understandable, moreover, that a matter of this kind, in which documents of very dubious origin played a large role, was deliberately obscured by its promoters to such an extent that no one could find their way around it anymore! Another interesting chapter is the one devoted to the symbols of the Tarot, not only because the occult inventions to which this question has given rise are appreciated for their true worth, but also because it alludes to a certain rather dark side of the subject, which no one else seems to have pointed out, and which most certainly does exist; The author, without dwelling on it excessively, clearly speaks in this regard of "tradition in reverse", which shows that he has at least sensed certain truths concerning "counter-initiation".

• Walter H. Dudley and R. Albert Fisher – *The Mystic Light. The Script of Harzael-Harzrael*

(Rider and Co., London).

The first of the two authors is said to have written this work "by inspiration," and the second to have "interpreted and adapted it to earthly understanding." We know what we generally think of productions of this kind, and this one certainly does not improve our opinion. It contains, expressed in an improbable style, things that are, in essence, quite commonplace, while others are of the most extravagant fantasy. The formation and constitution of the earth, the moon, and the stellar (or "constellar," as it is called) world, in particular, are the subject of interminable considerations that nothing can justify, neither from the ordinary "scientific" point of view, which matters little to us, nor from the traditional point of view, which is much more serious. The history of the "four great earthly dispensations" bears no more resemblance to anything known of actual traditions. And all of this is accompanied by...

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numerous figures, which certainly have no connection whatsoever with true symbolism. It is even implied that any criticism leveled against this script risks simply "offending heaven and earth"; coming from people who so obviously believe themselves to be "on a mission," this is hardly surprising; what is more astonishing is that such a book, and especially one so voluminous, managed to find a publisher at all…

- **Eliphas Lévi – *The Key to the Great Mysteries***

(Niclaus Publishers, Paris).

Our readers are aware of our reservations about the works of Eliphas Lévi; moreover, their contents should be considered merely the expression of "personal views," for the author himself never claimed any traditional lineage; he always declared that he owed nothing to anything but his own research, and contrary assertions are, in short, nothing more than legends perpetrated by overly enthusiastic admirers. In the present book, perhaps the most interesting aspect, albeit from a rather contingent point of view, is the truly curious detail it provides about certain "underlying" aspects of the era in which it was written; for this reason alone, it certainly deserved to be republished. In another vein, it is also necessary to point out some of the documents attached to it in the appendix, notably the hermetic figures of Nicolas Flamel, which one may wonder to what extent they have not been "arranged", and the translation of *the Asch Mezareph* of the Jew Abraham; for the latter, it is very regrettable that the provenance of the fragments which are given separately as complements to the eight chapters is not expressly indicated, which would have been a guarantee of their authenticity; the reconstruction of the whole of the treatise is moreover presented only as "hypothetical", but it is very difficult to know to what extent the copyists who would have "fragmented it to make it unintelligible" are responsible for this, and what exactly is the part of Eliphas Lévi himself.

- **Emmanuel Swedenborg – *The New Jerusalem and its heavenly doctrine, preceded by a notice on Swedenborg, by Pastor E. -A. Sutton***

(Swedenborg *250th* Anniversary *Edition ,* 1688-1938. Swedenborg Society, London)

This small book can give an overview of Swedenborg's doctrine, of which it is like a summary; one must bear in mind, when reading it, the often bizarre nature of the author's terminology, who readily employs not exactly new words, but, perhaps more problematically, ordinary words to which he gives a completely unusual meaning. It seems to us that, in a translation, these oddities could have been eliminated to some extent without altering the meaning; the translators, however, judged otherwise, deeming this terminology necessary "to designate new things which are

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"now revealed," which seems to us a bit of an exaggeration because, in essence, the ideas expressed are not of such an extraordinary order. In truth, the "inner meaning" of the Scriptures, as Swedenborg conceives it, doesn't even go very far, and his symbolic interpretations are not particularly profound: when one has said, for example, that, in the Apocalypse, "the new heaven and the new earth signify a new Church," or that "the holy city signifies the doctrine of the true Divine," is one much further ahead? Comparing this with the truly esoteric meaning, that is to say, in the terms of the Hindu tradition, the future *Manvantara* in the first case, and *Brahmapura* in the second, one immediately sees the whole difference… In the "doctrine" itself, there is a mixture of truths that are sometimes obvious and assertions that are highly questionable; And an impartial reader can find, even from a purely logical standpoint, surprising "gaps," especially when one considers Swedenborg's other scientific and philosophical activities. We do not dispute, moreover, that he may have genuinely entered a certain world from which he drew his "revelations"; but this world, which he sincerely took to be the "spiritual world," was certainly very different from it, and was, in fact, only a psychic realm still quite close to the earthly world, with all the illusions that such a realm inevitably entails. This example of Swedenborg is, in short, quite instructive, for it clearly illustrates the dangers that arise, in such cases, from the lack of adequate doctrinal preparation; scholar and philosopher were, admittedly, entirely insufficient "qualifications," and could in no way enable him to discern what kind of "other world" he was actually dealing with.

March 1940

- **Charles Clyde Hunt – *Masonic Symbolism***

(Laurance Press Co., Cedar Rapids, Iowa).

The author, Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Iowa, published a book about ten years ago entitled *Some Thoughts on Masonic Symbolism ;* the present volume is a re-edition of that book, but considerably enlarged by the addition of almost twice as many new chapters. These had appeared separately in the interim as articles in the *Grand Lodge Bulletin,* and we have already had occasion to mention most of them as they appeared. It might have been better, it seems to us, to keep the book's original title, for it is not, as the new title might suggest, a comprehensive treatise on Masonic symbolism; rather, it is a series of studies, each dealing with more or less specific points. Moreover, what is immediately striking upon seeing these studies thus brought together is that the interpretations given are based almost exclusively on a certain meaning, since Freemasonry represents a distinctly Western form of initiation. However, many questions could be greatly clarified by a comparison with data from other traditions.

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Furthermore, the biblical texts themselves are hardly considered except in their most literal sense; that is to say, the explanations drawn from them are primarily historical on the one hand and moral on the other. This is clearly insufficient, since the focus here should be not on the religious perspective, but on the initiatory one. There seems to be a certain tendency to confuse the two domains, which is, moreover, all too common in Anglo-Saxon Freemasonry. The author
seems to assign as the main goal of Freemasonry what he calls "character -*building* " ; this expression is in fact only a simple "metaphor", rather than a true symbol; the word "character" is very vague, and, in any case, it does not seem to indicate anything that goes beyond the psychological order; it is therefore still something very exoteric, whereas, if one spoke of "spiritual construction", it could have a much deeper meaning, especially if one added the more properly "technical" details that it would be easy to extract in this regard from Masonic symbolism, provided that one knows how to avoid "moralizing" purely and simply about the symbols, which certainly has nothing initiatory about it and hardly justifies the affirmation of the esoteric character of Freemasonry. All this does not detract from the merit and interest of the book in the more particular field in which it prefers to remain, that is to say especially with regard to the contribution it makes to the elucidation of a number of obscure or generally misunderstood points, of which there are too many in the present state of the Masonic tradition, we mean since the latter has been reduced to being only "speculative".

- **Giuseppe Leti and Louis Lachat – *Esotericism on Stage: The The Magic Flute; Parsifal; Faust***

(Derain and Raclet, Lyon).

The title of this book is perhaps insufficiently precise, since the three pieces studied within it are considered (or at least such was the intention of the authors) from the more specific perspective of Masonic symbolism, rather than from that of esotericism in general. Moreover, this might immediately raise an objection, because while the Masonic character of The *Magic Flute* is well known and cannot be doubted, the same cannot be said of the other two; and while it can at least be argued that Goethe was a Freemason, just like Mozart, the same cannot be said of Wagner. It seems clear that if there are any points of comparison between *Parsifal* and Masonic symbolism, this stems from the Grail legend itself, or from the medieval "current" to which it belongs, much more than from Wagner's adaptation. Wagner was not necessarily aware of its original initiatory character and has even been criticized for altering this character by substituting a somewhat nebulous mysticism. All the similarities indicated by the authors can ultimately be explained by what they call the "hermetic legacy" in Freemasonry, which corresponds well to what we have just said. Moreover, they too often mix in rather vague considerations that no longer pertain to symbolism or esotericism, but only to an "ideology" which, if it represents their conception of the

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Freemasonry is certainly by no means inherent to Freemasonry itself, and could only have infiltrated some of its branches due to the degeneration we have often discussed. As for Goethe's case, it is quite complex; it would be worthwhile to examine more closely to what extent his poem *Faust* is truly "marked by the Masonic spirit," as a critic quoted here has stated, and for whom the "Masonic spirit" was perhaps, in essence, only the idea commonly held by the public; this is certainly more debatable than for other works by the same author, such as *Wilhelm Meister* or the enigmatic tale of the *Green Snake ;* and indeed, in truth, there are parts in *Faust,* which constitutes a somewhat "chaotic" whole, whose inspiration seems rather anti-traditional; The influences that were exerted on Goethe were undoubtedly not exclusively Masonic, and it might be worthwhile to try to determine them more precisely… Moreover, there are a multitude of interesting remarks in this book, but all of this, which is in great need of clarification and order, could only be done by someone who is not affected, as the authors are too visibly, by modern, “progressive” and “humanitarian” ideas, which are the antipodes of any true esotericism.

- **André Savoret – *The Psychoanalytic Inversion***

(Heugel Bookstore, "Psyché" editions, Paris).

This brochure contains a severe critique of psychoanalysis, which we can certainly only approve, and which even coincides on certain points with what we ourselves have written here on this subject, particularly concerning the particularly disturbing nature of psychoanalytic "transmission," about which the author also cites our articles. The title is justified by the fact that not only does psychoanalysis reverse the normal relationship between the "conscious" and the "subconscious," but also that it presents itself, in many respects, as a kind of "religion in reverse," which clearly shows the source from which it may be inspired;
the pedagogical role it claims to play and its infiltration into the various methods of so-called "new education" are also something quite significant… The second part, entitled *Totemism and Freudism,* is devoted more specifically to the examination of the extravagant theory that Freud formulated on the origin of religion, taking as a starting point the already rather fantastic and incoherent lucubrations of sociologists on "totemism", and adding to them his own conceptions, one might readily say his "obsessions";
All of this gives a very enlightening idea of a certain part of "science". contemporary… and the mentality of those who believe in it!

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- **R. de Saussure – *The Greek Miracle, A Psychoanalytic Study on the Hellenic civilization***

(Denoël Publishers, Paris).

Here we have a precise example of theories of the kind discussed above: a few lines from the introduction will give a sufficient idea of the spirit in which this book is conceived: “The cradle of humanity appeared to us as a kind of collective neurosis that hindered the development of intelligence. (Let us admire in passing this image of a “cradle”)

which is a “neurosis”…) Every civilization is an attempt, more or less successful, at spontaneous self-healing. The first, Greek civilization, managed to tear down the veil that separated it from reality.” It goes without saying that what is called “intelligence” here is nothing more than reason, and that its “development”
consists of turning exclusively towards the realm of the senses; and, as for "reality", this simply refers to things considered from a profane point of view, which, for the author and those who think like him, represents "the most complete fulfillment of man"! Thus, even when certain facts are stated accurately, the interpretation given is quite the opposite of what it should be: everything in the "classical" period that marks a degeneration or a deviation from previous eras is presented, on the contrary, as "progress"... In all this, moreover, the author has put very little of himself, for his book is made up mainly of quotations from "authorities" for whom he clearly has the greatest respect; he seems to be one of those who accept without the slightest discussion all the ideas taught more or less "officially"; In this respect, one could consider his work as a rather curious "anthology" of what is generally accepted in current "scientistic" circles regarding ancient civilizations. It would be quite pointless to go into detail and dwell on the explanation given for the so-called "Greek miracle"; stripping it of all the Freudian "mythology" surrounding it, one could essentially summarize it in these few words: it was the revolt against family institutions, and consequently against all traditional order, which, by making "freedom of thought" possible, was the initial cause of all "progress"; this is therefore, fundamentally, nothing more than the very expression of the modern anti-traditional spirit in its most brutal form. Let us add one further remark: it has been successively fashionable, for about a century now, to equate "primitive men" with children, then with savages; Now, we want to equate them with the sick, and more specifically with "neurotics"; unfortunately, we fail to realize that these "neurotics" are, in reality, only one of the most characteristic products of the much-vaunted "civilization" of our time!

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April 1940

- **Shri Ramana Maharshi – *Maharshi's Gospel***

(Sriramanasraman, Tiruvannamalai, South India).

This small volume was published on the occasion of Shri's sixtieth birthday Ramana, December 27, 1939; this, like most of his previous works, is a collection of his answers to questions posed by various disciples. The main topics they address are renunciation of the fruits of action, silence and solitude, control of the mind, the relationship between *Bhakti* and *Jnana,* the "Self" and individuality, the realization of the "Self," and the role of the *Guru* in its dual "external" and "internal" sense. We will note in particular the teaching given on the subject of action: it is not action itself that hinders realization, but the idea that it is "I" who acts, and the effort made to abstain from action as well as to act; action performed with perfect detachment does not affect the self. Let us also point out what concerns the effects of what we can call an "action of presence": the communication of Knowledge can only really take place in silence, through a radiance of inner strength which is incomparably more powerful than speech and all other manifestations of any external activity; this, in short, is the true doctrine of "non-action".

- **Shri Ramana Maharshi – *Who am I?***

(Sriramanasraman, Tiruvannamalai, South India).

In this new edition of the booklet, the translation has been improved and even almost entirely redone; perhaps the only regret is that fewer Sanskrit terms have been included than in the first version, as this is something that always greatly helps to clarify the meaning. Furthermore, an English translation of a poem on "Self-Knowledge," composed by Sri Ramana at the request of one of his disciples, has been added at the end.

- **Clarence H. Hamilton – *Wei Shih Er Lun, or the Treatise in twenty stanzas on Representation-only, by Vasubandhu***

Translated from The Chinese version of Hsüan Tsang, Tripitaka Master of the T'ang Dynasty. (American Oriental Society, New Haven, Connecticut).

The treatise in question is the first of the two fundamental classical texts of the *Vijnaptimâtra* school (this is the designation rendered here by *Representation-only),* one of the branches of the Mahayana Yogashara school; these two texts are the *Vimshatika* and the *Trimshikika* of Vasubandhu, of which Sylvain Lévi had given, a few years ago, a so-called French translation that was more or less

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entirely unintelligible: wanting to apply himself to rendering each word of the text by a single word, even when there are no corresponding terms in French, he had come to employ at every moment neologisms such as "inscience", "mentation", "ainsté", "essencité", which are properly nothing but true barbarisms, and even more improbable expressions, such as a "notation de tréfonds", a "imprégnation de concoction", a "revolution du contenant", a "mise-au point de barrage", and so on, to which it is impossible to find any meaning whatsoever; this is, assuredly, a very good example to show that we have never exaggerated anything in speaking of the defects of certain works of "orientalists" and of their perfect uselessness. The author of this English translation seems to be showing considerable leniency towards his predecessor, merely stating that he was unable to follow his "specialized vocabulary" and attributing its oddities to "a concern for preserving linguistic nuances." The truth is that, with the pretension of "rendering the meaning exactly," Sylvain Lévi rendered absolutely none. Mr. Hamilton, fortunately, did not fall into the same trap. This is not to say, of course, that his translation cannot be debated on certain points, for this is certainly a very difficult text, due to the very nature of the ideas expressed in it, and one should not rely too heavily, in this respect, on the possibilities of Western philosophical terminology. But, in any case, it can at least be understood and presents a very plausible meaning as a whole. The translation, with the Chinese text of Hiuen-tsang facing it, is accompanied by notes providing numerous clarifications, and preceded by an introduction containing a history of the Chinese versions of the treatise and an analysis of its content; the latter is perhaps a little influenced by the idea that there is something here comparable to Western "idealism", although the author recognizes that "Vasubandhu's idealist doctrine is ultimately at the service of a supra-intellectual realization", we would say more precisely "supra-rational"; but is this not precisely the essential point, the one which, by profoundly differentiating this doctrine from modern philosophical speculations, gives it its real character and its true scope?

- **Edward Jabra Jurji – *Illumination in Islamic Mysticism; a translation, with an introduction and notes, based upon a critical edition of Abu-al Mawàhib al-Shâdhili's treatise entitled Qawânîn Hikam al-Ishrâq***

(Princeton University Press. Princeton, New Jersey).

The term "Islamic mysticism," popularized by Nicholson and some other orientalists, is unfortunately inaccurate, as we have already explained on several occasions: in fact, it is *tasawwuf* that is being discussed, that is to say, something which is essentially initiatory and not mystical.

The author of this book seems, moreover, to follow Western "authorities" too readily, which leads him to sometimes say somewhat strange things, for example that "it is now established" that Sufism has such and such a characteristic;

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would really suggest that it is a matter of studying some ancient doctrine that has long since disappeared; but Sufism exists today and, consequently, can always be directly known, so there is nothing to "establish" about it. Similarly, it is both naive and shocking to say that "members of the Shadhili brotherhood have recently been observed in Syria"; we would have thought it well known that this *tariqah,* in one or another of its many branches, was more or less widespread in all Islamic countries, especially since it has certainly never considered concealing itself; but this unfortunate "observation" might legitimately lead one to wonder what peculiar kind of espionage certain Orientalists might be engaging in! There are "nuances" that will probably escape American or European readers; But we would have thought that a Syrian, who, even if Christian, is still *ibn el-Arab,* should have had a little more oriental “sensitivity”… To get to other points more important in substance, it is regrettable to see the author admit the theory of “borrowings” and “syncretism”; if it is “difficult to determine the beginnings of Sufism in Islam”, it is because, traditionally, it has and can have no other “beginning” than that of Islam itself, and it is in questions of this kind that one should be particularly wary of the abuses of the modern “historical method”. On the other hand, the *ishrâqiyah doctrine,* in the proper sense of the word, represents only a rather special point of view, that of a certain school which is mainly attached to Abul-Futûh es-Suhrawardi (who should not be confused with the founder of the *tarîqah* which bears the same name), a school which cannot be regarded as entirely orthodox, and to which some even deny any real link with *taçawwuf,* even by deviation, considering it rather as simply “philosophical”; it is rather astonishing that it is claimed to be traced back to Mohyiddin ibn Arabi himself, and it is no less astonishing that the shâdhilite *tarîqah* is to be derived from it, however indirectly. When one encounters the word *ishrâq* somewhere , as in the treatise translated here, one is not thereby entitled to conclude that it refers to the doctrine *of ishrâqiyah,* any more than one is entitled to speak of "illuminism" wherever its Western equivalent of "illumination" is found; all the more so, an idea like that of *tawhîd* was not "derived" from this particular doctrine, for it is an idea absolutely essential to Islam in general, even in its exoteric aspect (there is a branch of study designated as *ilm at-tawhîd* among the *ulûm ez-zâher,* that is, the sciences that are taught publicly in Islamic universities). The entire introduction is, in short, built solely on a misunderstanding caused by the use of the term *ishrâq ;* And the very content of the treatise in no way justifies such an interpretation, for, in reality, it contains nothing that is not perfectly orthodox *tasawwuf .* Fortunately, the translation itself, which is the most important part of the book, is much better than the considerations that precede it; it is undoubtedly difficult, in the absence of the text, to fully verify its accuracy, but one can nevertheless ascertain it to a fairly large extent from the indication of a great number of Arabic terms, which are generally very well rendered. There are, however, a few words that would warrant some reservations: thus, *mukâshafah* is not properly "revelation," but rather "intuition"; more precisely, it is a perception of a subtle order *(mulâtafah,* translated here in a way

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(quite extraordinary in its *amiability),* inferior, at least when the word is taken in its strict sense, to pure contemplation *(mushâhadah).* We cannot understand the translation of *muthûl,* which essentially implies an idea of "similarity," by *attendance,* especially since *âlam el muthûl* is usually the "world of archetypes"; *baqâ* is rather "permanence" than "subsistence"; *dîn* cannot be rendered as "faith," which in Arabic is *imân ; kanz el-asrâr er-rabbâniyah* is not "the secrets of the divine treasure" (which would be *asrâr el-kanz el-ilâhî),* but "the treasure of Sunday secrets" (there is an important difference, in "technical" terminology, between *ilâhî* and *rabbânî).* One could undoubtedly point out a few other inaccuracies of the same kind; But, all in all, this is rather insignificant overall, and, the translated treatise being of undeniable interest, the book, with the exception of its introduction, ultimately deserves to be recommended to all those who study Islamic esotericism.

May 1940

• AM Hocart – *The Castes*

Translated from the English manuscript by EJ Lévy and J. Auboyer (Paul Geuthner, Paris).

This work differs markedly from what is usually written in the West on the same subject, undoubtedly because the author (who unfortunately died before its publication) was not a professional orientalist, but had the opportunity, during an administrative career, to make direct observations in Ceylon and Polynesia, which served as the basis for his work. This gives him the right to criticize with justifiable severity the theories imagined by modern "scholars," who "were so intoxicated by their critical thinking that they came to believe they knew more about the ancients than the ancients themselves," and who prejudicedly rejected all the traditional explanations contained in ancient texts, for the sole reason that they were traditional, whereas an impartial examination of the facts, on the contrary, confirms the value of these explanations and reveals the inanity of those that have been put forward to oppose them. One of the finest examples of these fanciful modern theories is the one according to which the distinction of castes originates in a difference of races, on the pretext that caste is designated by the word *varna ,* which literally means "color." The author has no difficulty showing that the colors attributed to the different castes cannot represent those of so many races, that they are in reality purely symbolic, and that, moreover, as traditional texts teach, they are related to a division, found among the most diverse peoples, into four quarters corresponding to the cardinal directions. This last point is quite important.

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so that we plan to return to this topic in a special article* . It is regrettable that the author did not consider that *jâti,* another designation for caste, which means "birth," could also have a symbolic value; fundamentally, this word primarily designates individual nature, since it is the inherent potential of each individual that determines the conditions of their birth; and, even if taken in the sense of "lineage," it remains that this lineage can often be understood primarily in a spiritual sense, as shown by certain "genealogies" which are clearly nothing more than traditional "chains." In any case, what clearly emerges from the facts presented is that "the caste system is a sacrificial organization," we would rather say "ritual," which has a broader meaning, since there are obviously many other kinds of rites besides sacrifices; And if the castes and their subdivisions appear to be identified to some extent with professions, it is precisely because they are essentially ritual functions, for "professions and rites cannot be exactly distinguished, and the Sanskrit word *karma,* 'action,' 'work,' applies to both"; and, we might add, in a strictly traditional society, every occupation, of whatever nature, necessarily has a ritual character. This is not, however, a reason to call all these functions indiscriminately "priestly," which implies an unfortunate ambiguity; and we would say the same in the case (for there is a certain ambiguity here) where this same designation of "priestly" is applied only to the first two castes; every member of society necessarily has certain rites to perform, but what properly characterizes the priestly function as such and distinguishes it from all others is, above all, the teaching of doctrine. What is even more serious is that the author constantly designates the Kshatriyas as the first caste and the Brahmins as the second, an inversion which is contrary to all tradition, and which also makes certain things incomprehensible, as we may have to explain on another occasion; his idea is obviously to place royalty at the top of the hierarchy, and consequently above the priesthood (understood this time in its proper sense), but this is precisely what is untenable from the traditional point of view, and, where such a thing actually exists, it is only the indication of a state of degeneration; this is probably the case of certain Polynesian societies that the author has studied, and, even in Ceylon, it is very possible that Buddhist influence has introduced certain alterations of the same kind, although the extinction of the upper castes there makes it more difficult to ascertain directly. On the other hand, the author does not seem to grasp the profound reason for rites, their very principle, and, more generally, the "non-human" element inherent in every traditional institution: if society is ritually constituted, it is not for more or less "psychological" reasons, but rather because it is, by that very fact, a reflection of higher-order realities. There are, therefore, gaps in all this that can only be filled with a deeper understanding of traditional doctrines; but it remains true nonetheless that this book contains a wealth of information.

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* *[The Zodiac and the Cardinal Points* (October-November 1945).]

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interesting points, which we cannot naturally consider summarizing or listing in detail, and many of which could serve as starting points for considerations going much further than the author himself could have suspected. One could also point out some inaccuracies in terminology, such as the designation of the Vaishyas as "cultivators," which is too narrow to apply to the entire caste, the erroneous use of the word "initiation" to designate admission into a caste, or the confusion of the "Titans," corresponding to the *Asuras,* with the "Giants," which are something very different; but we will not dwell further on these flaws, which, on the whole, are of only secondary importance; And, if it is permissible to find that the remarks relating to the exercise of certain trades in present-day Egypt have only a very questionable relationship with the question of castes, there are still plenty of other more valid points of comparison to show that this institution, far from being specific to India as is too often believed, actually represents something very general, which is found, in one form or another, in the constitution of all traditional societies, and this, we can say, because it is rigorously in accordance with the very nature of things and the whole cosmic order.

- **D r Pierre Galimard – *Hippocrates and the Pythagorean Tradition*** *(Jouve et Cie, Paris).*

This work goes far beyond the usual scope of doctoral theses in medicine, and could be considered an excellent introduction to the study of a whole range of questions that appear to have been greatly neglected until now. What makes Hippocrates so interesting is that he "appears to us as the last representative, at least in the West, of traditional medicine"; this medicine, which was essentially a "priestly art," was probably already quite weakened in Greece in his time, and one may wonder to what extent he himself understood it.

But the data he preserved in his writings, which without him would be entirely lost (for until him they had probably only ever been transmitted orally), nonetheless deserve a thorough examination, which, especially if a comparison were added with similar things that exist in various Eastern countries, might perhaps allow us to rediscover their true meaning. Dr.

Galimard's particular aim was to demonstrate the links between the concepts expounded by Hippocrates and those of the Pythagoreans, who also belong to the same transitional period between Archaic and Classical Greece: the symbolism of numbers, the analogy of the macrocosm and the microcosm, the theory of temperaments and their quaternary correspondences, the assertion of a close relationship between wisdom and medicine—all of this, in Hippocrates, is clearly of Pythagorean inspiration. Naturally, the author could only provide an overview of these various subjects here; but, since he himself states that "his work, far from exhausting the question and concluding, aims only to be an introduction," it is to be hoped that he will be able to continue these studies later and to more fully reconstruct the character of this "medicine of sacred origin," so different in every respect from the secular medicine of the

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modern, and which, contrary to the exclusively analytical and experimental tendencies of the latter, "derives all its principles and their applications from above".

- **Father Victor Poucel – *Mysticism of the Earth: II. The Parable of the World***

(Plon Bookstore, Paris).

This book, like the *Plea for the Body* we have already discussed* and to which it follows, is thankfully far removed from the "ideal" banalities and empty "abstractions" in which our era revels, and against which the author rightly rails from the outset. To define its main idea in a few words, one could say that it essentially aims to restore to the sensible world the symbolic value that makes it, in its own order, an image of spiritual realities, a value expressly recognized by medieval Christian thought, as well as by all other traditional thought; and, while such a conception is certainly quite foreign to the modern mentality, we do not think there is any reason to appear apologetic for returning to it, since it is in reality the one common to all "normal" humanity. The author, of course, does not claim to treat this subject exhaustively, which would obviously be impossible; He only wanted to outline different aspects of it, but even within these limits, perhaps he could sometimes have gone a little further; there are certain chapters that are somewhat disappointing, such as *Earth and Heaven,* for which the Chinese, whom he so readily cites elsewhere, could easily have provided him with much more precise data, or *The Heart of the World,* which, in the universal tradition, is something quite different from what he sees; one gets the impression, in cases like these, that he is not sufficiently aware that true symbolism is essentially an "exact science." We wonder if it is not also for this reason that there seems to be in him a certain tendency to diminish the value of the very considerations he presents, as if their real scope escaped him to some extent, to such a point that he sometimes goes so far as to accept a kind of reversal of the relationships between them and things that are in reality of a much more "external" order; Isn't there here a kind of concession, probably unintentional, to the modern mind and its exclusive "exotericism"? This is particularly noticeable in a chapter devoted to the symbolism of numbers (this chapter is entitled *In Pondere et Mensura,* and, incidentally, we cannot explain this omission of "number," explicitly mentioned in the *Wisdom text,* where the three terms refer to distinct modes of quantity, since it is precisely number that is, in fact, the subject here from beginning to end); thus, when one knows the full importance of the numerical value of letters in certain sacred languages, and the impossibility of truly understanding their profound meaning without taking it into account, one is entitled to be astonished upon reading that "one can make better use of time" than of

* [March 1938.]

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to stop at an interpretation of the texts based on the science of numbers. It goes without saying, moreover, that such an interpretation is only applicable to languages that are thus constituted, like Hebrew and Arabic (and it is quite natural for those who are accustomed to using these languages), and that it is absurd to want to transfer it, for example, to modern Western languages; on this point and on several others, we would certainly be much more severe than the author with regard to certain contemporary digressions. What justifies this last reflection is above all the surprise caused by certain references to a "Steinerian" doctor, for example, or even to a chemist who tries to accommodate astrology to the points of view of modern science (and who, moreover, once proclaimed himself an "adorer" of Madame Blavatsky, a detail no doubt unknown to Father Poucel); It would certainly not be difficult to find better "authorities," traditionally more reliable than these; and, when it comes to "sacred science," one can never be too rigorous in one's "discernment"... As for astrology, specifically, we cannot help but regret that the author was led, for lack of more trustworthy information, to accept an interpretation of zodiacal symbolism that is not without fantasy; and we must also note, in this regard, that the beginning of the year at the spring equinox, while it is especially true for certain traditional forms (like the autumn equinox for others, for example for the Jewish tradition), is nevertheless not "primordial" and, in any case, is not in accordance with the Christian tradition, for which it is the winter solstice that marks the beginning of the annual cycle; Let us add that there is something here that is particularly important for "situating" the different traditions through their cosmic correspondences. Regarding the relationships between the traditions, we must also mention incidentally a point that directly concerns us: a footnote seems to suggest that the "Abrahamic" tradition is "collected, more or less altered, in Kabbalah and Islam"; we are perfectly certain, on the contrary, that it is in no way altered there, since these are authentic and orthodox branches of this same "Abrahamic" tradition. It may be found that we formulate many criticisms: but, if we insist on them, it is because this seems to us more profitable than to stick to the general praise that the book undoubtedly deserves, and that the work that the author has undertaken, and that he proposes to pursue, presents a very particular interest from the point of view of a restoration of the traditional mentality: so we can only hope that this mentality is reflected in it as fully as possible, and we will be very happy if our remarks can contribute to this.

October-November 1945

[Note from *Études Traditionnelles :* "The reviews we are publishing here were written five years ago and were intended to appear in the July 1940 issue, which was never published. Since then, the works reviewed have

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found exhausted, but we felt that this fact did not detract from the interest of the considerations presented by our eminent colleague.

- **PV Piobb –** ***The Fate of Europe according to the famous Prophecy of the Popes by Saint Malachy, accompanied by the Prophecy of Orval and the very latest indications of Nostradamus***

(Dangles Publishing, Paris).

Various predictions, commonly referred to by the misleading name of "prophecies," have, as is well known, been very fashionable for some time now, and they have given rise to a multitude of books that attempt to comment on and interpret them with varying degrees of ingenuity; this one, the greater part of which is devoted to the "prophecy of Saint Malachy," appeared, by a rather singular coincidence, if it was not expressly intended, almost exactly at the time of the death of Pope Pius XI. The author first discusses the attribution of the "prophecy" to Saint Malachy, and he concludes that this is in reality only a "pseudonym," which is indeed very probable; but one of the reasons he gives is at the very least strange: he has discovered a "heresy" in the fact that the last pope is designated as *Petrus Romanus ;* First, this motto may be purely symbolic or "emblematic" like the others, and it does not necessarily mean that this pope will literally take the name Peter, but rather alludes to the analogy of the end of a cycle with its beginning; second, if it is agreed that no pope should take this name, this is nevertheless only a custom which, whatever he may say, certainly has nothing to do with "dogma"! Now, that the choice of the "pseudonym" may have been influenced by a connection between the name of Saint Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh and friend of Saint Bernard, and that of the prophet Malachy, is quite plausible; that this "pseudonym" is collective, and that we are thus "in the presence of an association that prophesied," is not impossible either, although one might think, at first glance, that such a hypothesis is perhaps more likely to complicate the question rather than facilitate its solution;

But the following will give us the opportunity to return to this point. We will pass over the considerations intended to show the links, quite obvious in any case, that unite the history of the papacy with that of Europe in general; but we will retain this statement: “a prophecy is a ‘amusement’ for the public, unless it is an act of ‘propaganda’”; we would even readily say that it can be both, and this is why an “amusement” of this kind is never harmless. The author, for his part, seems to conclude from this that, if a “prophetic text” has a serious character (and he believes that this is the case for the one in question), it does not really constitute a “prophecy,” but what is called today, in rather poor French, a “directive”; but then, as he himself asks, “a directive for whom or for what?” This brings us back to the question of the "fabrication" of the so-called "prophecy"; and what can be most easily observed in this regard is that those who first spoke of it, towards the end of the 16th century, did not tell the truth and invoked non-existent earlier references, which seems to indicate that they wanted to conceal something

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thing; but should we conclude, as some have done, that the text was "fabricated" solely "for the needs of a cause," on the occasion of the Conclave of 1590? The author is not willing to be satisfied with such a "simplistic" solution, and perhaps he is not wrong, for this, in any case, would not explain the often striking accuracy of the mottos relating to the popes after that date; but he believes that the "manner" employed by the "prophet" is intended to provoke discussions and reactions in the public, so as to obtain a result desired in advance, and that there is thus, "at each stage of the prophecy, a particular goal, derived from the general goal," which is always to favor certain "interests," which, he is careful to specify, are by no means "financial interests"; the so-called "prophet" would therefore ultimately be only the instrument of a certain special "policy." This would explain why "a prophecy cannot be written in plain text," but, in order to "always leave room for doubt," must be written "using a cryptographic method," because "cryptography has this great advantage: only those who possess the key are capable of understanding the true meaning of the predictions." Should we conclude from this that these "predictions" are, in essence, merely a kind of "code word" intended for those individuals? It seems to us that an objection could be raised here: it can always happen that a "cryptography"

what if it is deciphered by someone other than those to whom the "key" has been entrusted: what will happen then if that person does not share the "interests" that the "prophecy" is meant to serve, and is it really enough to say that, "if he wants to tell everything he knows, he risks causing a catastrophe of which he will be the first victim"? In any case, let us say from the outset that, in reading Mr. Piobb's previous works, we already had the impression that he attributes excessive importance to "cryptography," to the point of wanting to reduce everything to questions of this kind; we certainly do not dispute that these exist! But finally, this is only one "small side" of things, and, by seeing only this (as well as by seeing everywhere only "wordplay," following another tendency quite close to that one, and stemming from a deviant "hermeticism" of which we could cite more than one example), one easily falls into a certain "naturalism" of a rather disturbing nature... We will not insist on what follows: that "the popes are not the beneficiaries of the prophecy that concerns them," we readily admit; But, if we must simply note that "the further we advance, the thicker the darkness becomes," so that we finally arrive at "absolute blackness," what is the point of bothering to write so much about it? As for the proofs that "the text said to be of Saint Malachy is cryptographic," proofs which are based mainly on the number of mottoes and on the main divisions that can be established in it, we will not investigate to what extent they are convincing, because one could discuss this subject almost indefinitely; We will retain only (and we will see why later) the suggestion that all this might have some connection with the destruction of the Order of the Temple, and also the particular importance given to the number 33: of the 112 mottos, the first 100 would be divided into 34 + 2 × 33, just like the cantos of Dante's Divine Comedy (but why not point out this at least curious parallel, especially in connection with the allusion to the Order of the Temple?), while the last 12 would form a sort of separate series, corresponding to a zodiac. We will add, on this last point, that the way in which

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These zodiacal correspondences established here do not seem to us to be beyond dispute, for the last four mottos at least quite clearly suggest others, all different from these, especially if one considers that it is obviously the sign of Libra that must be that of "judgment." Next comes the detailed explanation of the mottos, a purely historical work about which we will say nothing, nor about the predictions to which the last ones give rise and which are undoubtedly worth… what all predictions of this kind are worth; in any case, the "anguishing dilemma" thus formulated: "the end of the world or the end of a world?"

This question certainly has no reason to arise for anyone with even the slightest knowledge of "cyclic laws," since these immediately provide the appropriate answer. What interests us more is the last part of the book, which is devoted to comparisons with indications given by other texts; first, the "Orval prophecy," about which the author admits his doubts, as it seems to him to be only a more or less skillful "imitation" of genuine "cryptographic prophecies"; then Nostradamus, and it is here that things, as we shall see, truly deserve closer examination. We know that Mr. Piobb published, some years ago, a work entitled *The Secret of Nostradamus ;* one might wonder whether he now intends to provide a sequel to it or whether he has not rather wanted to disavow it, so strange is the way in which he discusses it; This is not precisely because the predictions contained therein have hardly come true so far, for it is clear that one can always find quite easily, in this regard, some more or less valid excuses, and besides, this is after all only quite secondary; but he himself denounces a certain number of "errors" which he would have deliberately introduced, which, to put it frankly, does not give the impression of very great seriousness, for finally, if one believes one has good reasons not to tell the truth, one always has the recourse of keeping silent; If he truly wanted to make himself "an accomplice of the prophet," and if in this he "obeyed a prescription" as he claims, one would be justified in attributing to him very dark motives, and, for our part, we would prefer to think that he is slandering himself and that these reflections only came to him after the fact, especially since, in general, when one really has designs of this kind, one is rather careful to avoid letting it be hinted at… All this does not prevent him, moreover, from assuring that "the directives he had followed were correct"; and yet he acknowledges that he was unaware, in 1927, of several things that he has since discovered and which, if they are accurate, are of a nature to completely change the whole question; these are "three revelations" which it is worth transcribing verbatim: first, "Nostradamus did not write a word of his prophecies"; Then, "he was completely incapable of knowing what was in the book bearing his signature"; finally, "this book, the most authentic and complete edition of which is dated 1668, was printed during Nostradamus's lifetime, that is, before 1566." It seems this edition is "forged," which is certainly not impossible *a priori ;* even if, as the author claims, the printing press mentioned therein did not actually exist, this would be something that, in the past, and up until around the end of the 18th century, was not as exceptional as one might think; but, in fact, this is not the case, and not only did this printing press very well exist, but other well-known books came out of it, notably, in 1646, Guillaume Postel's *Absconditorum Clavis* (as

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Those who possess the edition from the *Rosicrucian Library* can verify this), and, from 1667 to 1670—that is, around the very date given by the Nostradamus edition—several works by Father Athanasius Kircher. The falsification of the supposed date raises some very troubling questions: if this edition were truly not from 1668, but more than a century earlier, how could its frontispiece depict, not the death of Louis XVI and the destruction of Paris, as some have quite gratuitously imagined, but, much more simply, the death of Charles I and the burning of London? We will not, of course, attempt to resolve this problem, as it would be up to Mr. Piobb to provide an explanation on this subject should he deem it appropriate; but it is somewhat surprising that he does not seem to have considered this difficulty. And that's not all: not only is this edition stated, in its full title, to have been "revised and corrected according to the first editions printed in Avignon in the year 1556 and in Lyon in the year 1558 and others," which clearly indicates that it is later than these, and which allows us to wonder why it is declared "the most authentic" since we do not know exactly what the corrections that have been introduced into it might be worth; but it also contains a life of Nostradamus in which there is express mention of his death, which occurred "on July 2, 1566, shortly before sunrise," which really hardly agrees with the assertion that it was "printed during his lifetime"! Whatever the case may be, and a reader somewhat demanding from the point of view of historical accuracy would certainly be entitled to ask the author for further clarification, what follows is reminiscent in many respects of certain "revelations" about Shakespeare that we discussed at the time, and this not only because, in both cases, these are editions of a "cryptographic" nature, but also because of much more precise similarities concerning the very nature of what is at issue; and it is here

that we see the reappearance of the "association that prophesied." Mr. Piobb is very secretive about this (and in a way that is quite typically "Western"), but we obviously have no reason to imitate him in this: for example, he points out two capital letters on page 126, but without saying what they are; now these two letters are an M and an F; if we consider them "from bottom to top" as he suggests, and then take into account the remark that "in 1668, if we were to believe conventional history, these singular letters must have had no meaning," and also the fact that, in the printer's address, we find "John, son of John, and the Widow," we can easily guess that he interprets these initials as meaning "Freemasonry"; our connection with "cryptography"

Wasn't Shakespearean justified? Then there are other initials that he gives this time, but without explaining them; these do not appear in the printed text itself, but he obtained them by translating a certain verse into Latin: "FMB – M.
"T." This could certainly mean many different things, but among other things, if you will, *Frater Molay Burgundus, Magister Templi.* If we accept this interpretation, the rest of the story becomes a little clearer: for example, regarding "symbolic dates," it is said that March 14, 1547, in the Letter to Henry II, conceals "another March 14"; unfortunately, might the "March 14" in question not actually be March 11? This, unless it is yet another "deliberate error," could cast some doubt on the solidity of the "construction."

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by Mr. Piobb; but, taking it as it is, we at least understand what he means when he designates, as the true authors of the text, "the signatories of a document several hundred years prior to Nostradamus," while carefully avoiding giving the slightest indication that would allow us to verify the existence and authenticity of said "document." The rest is relatively simpler: the successors of the people in question would have given the text "ready-made" to Nostradamus, no doubt after translating it, since it is assumed that the original must have been in Latin, and, moreover, it was not Nostradamus himself who had to do the translation, since it is stated, without it being very clear why, that he "was incapable of knowing even what this text referred to" which he was charged with publishing; Under these conditions, one would even have to suppose that the edition, with its "cryptographic" peculiarities, had been entirely prepared without his involvement, and that, in short, his entire role had been limited to putting or allowing his name to be put there, which, according to Mr. Piobb, wouldn't even be a name in reality, but merely a "pseudonym." Let's stop there, because the considerations we have left aside would not bring us any greater clarity; one can wonder if Mr. Piobb is right in fact and, in a way, "historically," but also, and perhaps above all, what he is trying to achieve with all this; why must there be so many things in it that bring to mind certain highly suspicious "underpinnings" to which we have alluded on other occasions, and which precisely also have very close links with a whole series of stories of so-called "prophecies"? We do not intend to delve any further into this question;

But in any case, if Mr. Piobb believes that a "social secret"—for that is essentially what it is—is "something far more important than ordinary esoteric truths," by which he seems to mean truths of a doctrinal nature, we will take the liberty of disagreeing with him on this point, for it is only in connection with doctrinal principles and as an application of these principles in a contingent domain that such a "secret" can truly be of any interest; and let us also consider, in order to restore everything to its proper perspective, what a "secret" like the one in question here can still be worth, in itself and separated from any consideration of a deeper order, once one leaves the confines of the European world…

- **P. Rochetaillée – *Nostradamus' Prophecies: Key to the Centuries, its application to the history of the Third Republic***

(Adyar Editions, Paris).

This book relates to the same subject as the previous one, but it is, on the whole, less enigmatic in appearance; its author was also largely inspired, in order to establish his "key", by Mr. Piobb's *Secret of Nostradamus ;*
However, we do not believe that he would be willing, at least not at present, to admit that "the entire work is based on the movement of the planets," because he
On the contrary, it suggests that, even where these appear to be expressly mentioned, it is actually something else entirely. Furthermore, what always strikes us in interpretations of this kind is the considerable importance

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disproportionate importance is attributed to contemporary facts and figures who, in a few centuries, will probably seem quite insignificant; and we cannot help but wonder whether, viewed from a certain distance in the future, they could really have held a greater place than they will in history when history considers them with an equivalent "detachment" in the past… From another point of view, there are also, in the explanation of certain words, some rather obvious misunderstandings, and that of many others is rather forced, if not purely fanciful; but it would certainly be of little use to go into the details of all this here;
We recall having already provided some quite sufficient examples of this in connection with another work on Nostradamus's *Letter to Henry II .* As for the "graphs" drawn up for various dates, called "sensitive points" by the author (who, moreover, prudently refrained from indicating any meaning whatsoever for those that still belong to the future), it certainly takes a great deal of goodwill to distinguish, for example, a "machine gun" or even a hammer and sickle, however schematically drawn they may be! Mr. Piobb would undoubtedly classify all this as "amusements for the public," in which we cannot fault him, and it must be things of this kind that he had in mind when he said that he had "let the reader dream about Nostradamus." What is perhaps a little more worrying is that we see the "Great Monarch" reappearing there (always understood literally as meaning a "king of France," which some passages of the Centuries hardly justify, however, and which Mr.

Piobb himself, we must say, seems to regard it in a rather ironic way), with allusions to the "Great Pyramid" and its infamous "secret," and also that the author declares to have been "secretly authorized (?) to publish the result of his research"; would he mean that he, too, "obeyed a prescription"; moreover, it would seem, with a twelve-year delay on Mr. Piobb's part, who believes that the "prescription" valid for 1927 was no longer valid in 1939? In our opinion, imagination, not to say "suggestion," plays a large role in all these stories; And, to show more precisely what we should think of it, we will suffice to add a very simple remark, choosing preferably as an example, for reasons easy to understand, a trait relating to a person who has died since the publication of the book: when we know the furiously anti-traditional, and more especially anti-Islamic, attitude that was that of "Mr. Ataturc" (an attitude which went so far as to make him renounce the name of Mustafa), it is at the very least amusing to see him attributed the intention of putting himself at the head of a so-called "pan-Islamic movement"; is someone who cannot better discern what is happening in the present really well qualified to formulate predictions about the future, with the sole help of a text as obscure and full of "traps" of all kinds as that of "the Great Initiate that was Nostradamus"?

"Grand Initiate," at least, according to Mr. Rochetaillée; and yet, if we are to believe Mr. Piobb, there would have been more than one "Grand Initiate" in this affair, but specifically the "named Nostradamus" would not have been one of them; certainly, the commentators, before "publishing the result of their research", even with "occult authorization", would do well to start by agreeing among themselves!

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- **Em. Ruir –** ***The Collapse of Europe According to the Prophecies of Nostradamus***

(Éditions Médicis, Paris).

Here again, the same questions are addressed, but from a somewhat different perspective, as the author is more modest and makes no claim to possess any particular "key," and indeed, in his conclusion, he quite rightly criticizes some of Mr. Piobb's assertions. For his part, he intends to limit himself to an interpretation "based on astrology," which is perhaps not a perfectly reliable method either, albeit for different reasons, and which, moreover, does not sit very well with his rather astonishing claim of a "divine inspiration" for Nostradamus, whose writings he places on the same level as the Apocalypse! It must be added that he is driven by a strong anti-Oriental prejudice: he speaks of a "Muslim Antichrist," a truly inconceivable monstrosity for anyone who has the slightest idea of what is said about the Antichrist in Islamic Tradition, and who would only be the first of a series of successive "Antichrists," all "Asian," who are to lead the invasions he predicts for the last quarter of the 20th century... All this is rather uninteresting, for us at least, as is what concerns the inevitable "Great French Monarch," and even the prediction, at a slightly more distant deadline, of a "Translation of the Earth" (?) to precede the apocalyptic "thousand-year reign." What we wish to draw attention to is simply this: in an attempt to determine precise dates, Mr. Ruir considers the divisions of a certain cyclical period he calls the "Adamic era," which essentially represents the duration of present-day humanity, to which he also assigns very narrow limits in the past. He takes as his starting point two so-called chronologies given by Nostradamus in his *Epistle to Henry II,* which are quite different from one another, clearly demonstrating that they should not be taken literally (not to mention that the second places Solomon only 490 years before Christ, which is an obvious historical impossibility). The author is correct in this, and it is also quite certain that in reality, at least for everything prior to Moses, there is no biblical chronology in the ordinary and literal sense of the word. It is therefore beyond doubt that Nostradamus intended to conceal within this work data that is quite different from what he appears to indicate (and the same observation would apply equally well to other purported chronologies, such as that of Trithemius *'s Treatise on Secondary Causes ,* for example); but what is far more certain is that the more or less ingenious calculations undertaken by Mr. Ruir led him to uncover the data in question. In any case, and this is the point we wished to make regarding this example, the expression of traditional sciences in the West seems almost always to have been shrouded, intentionally or not, in a virtually impenetrable obscurity; it is true that, in Eastern traditions, the actual duration of cyclical periods is also more or less concealed, but at least their numerical proportions, which are what essentially matters, are clearly indicated; here, on the contrary, no proportion seems to emerge from these series of fictitious dates. No doubt, we must conclude from this that it is a completely different mode of expression; but, given its incomparably more enigmatic character,

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Would all the efforts made to decipher it, even assuming they succeed, be sufficiently rewarded by the results that could be obtained?

January-February 1946

• Rabindra Nath Tagore – *Sadhana*

Translation and preface by Jean Herbert (Union des Imprimeries, Frameries, Belgium).

The first chapter of this book is, in our opinion, the best: the author rightly protests against the artificial opposition that the West claims to establish between man and nature, an opposition that implies a denial of the fundamental unity of all that exists; in India, on the contrary, “the state in which one has realized one’s kinship with the whole and penetrated into all things through union with God (who, as he says elsewhere, has nothing to do with the ‘pure abstraction’ of modern philosophers) was considered the ultimate goal and fulfillment of humanity.” The rest, unfortunately, is less satisfactory: it is understandable that a poet should be reluctant to renounce the world of forms, and we even readily admit that, to follow his own path, he must, more than any other person, take forms as his support; but this is only one path among many, and even more precisely, it is only the starting point of one possible path. If we do not go further, we will never transcend the level of "cosmic consciousness," which represents only a transitional stage, far removed from the ultimate goal, and at which it can even be dangerous to linger too long. We strongly fear that the author sees nothing beyond this, and the way he translates certain terms in his quotations from the Upanishads *bears* the mark of this limited perspective: is it tenable, for example, *that Ananda* means "joy"? In any case, the book's title is rather disappointing, for it makes no mention whatsoever of "realization" in the metaphysical sense, nor of the "technique" that can actually lead to it; Tagore may be a great poet, but it is certainly not possible to consider him a "spiritual Master."

• *Studies on Ramana Maharshi.* Volume One: Swami Siddheswarananda; Dr. Sarma K. Lakshman; Swami Tapasyananda

Introduction and translation by Jean Herbert (Union of Printing Works, Frameries, Belgium).

In the introduction, Mr. Jean Herbert apologizes for publishing only studies on Shri Ramana instead of the latter's own writings; it is true that these writings are very few in number, and that even the various collections of his oral teachings which

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The material published so far still represents only something very fragmentary and incomplete; however, we wonder if these are really the only reasons for this abstention, and what might suggest that there must be others is the rather bitter criticism made here of the Maharshi's entourage… It is also quite true that he "accepts no disciples" in the true sense of the word, although many people too easily claim this quality; we even doubt that there is any reason to "hope that a day will come when he will accept to assume the role of guru," because it seems that, if he only exercises what we have already called an "action of presence," it is precisely because of the very exceptional nature of the path he has followed. The main part of this first volume consists of a translation, slightly modified in certain respects, of the book that Dr. Sarma K. Lakshman previously published in English under the title *Mahâ-Yoga* and the pseudonym *Who .* We have already discussed this book and indicated the reservations that must be made about it from a doctrinal point of view; we will not return to it here, except to reiterate that it should be considered only as the expression of its author's own views. This translation is framed between a preface and an appendix; in the former, Swami Siddheswarânanda focuses on characterizing the path and attitude of Shri

Ramana, and he also points out, quite rightly, the errors made by a writer who claimed to appreciate it from the point of view of Western "mysticism"; as for the appendix of Swami Tapasyananda, it gives such a "reluctant" impression that one cannot help but wonder why it was written!

• FJ Alexander – *The Inner Kingdom*

French translation by Marcel Sauton; preface by Swami Siddheswarananda (Union des Imprimeries, Frameries, Belgium).

The author of this book was an American who was captivated by the works of Vivekananda and, after reading them, traveled to India to meet other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna; but evidently, it was Vivekananda's posthumous influence that always predominated in his writing. The style of the book is rather unpleasant, with its continual and utterly unnecessary repetitions of words, its exclamations both relevant and irrelevant; we will not dwell on the extreme vagueness of the terminology and the inappropriateness of many words, because, not having read the original, we cannot know precisely what role the translation plays, and we have the impression that it only exacerbates these flaws. As for the content, as one might expect, it represents something quite "mixed": alongside a few formulas borrowed from Hindu tradition, one encounters many others that are specifically Western; there are even passages where "purity" is discussed in a way that is a little too reminiscent of certain "obsessions" of Protestant moralism; there is also much talk of "ideal" and "character formation," which hardly deviates from the usual modern platitudes; and, from all of this, it would certainly be very difficult to extract anything clear. It is, moreover, generally quite "harmless," although there is, however, somewhere a piece of advice to "cultivate passivity" which is terribly dangerous; but what we

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What is always surprising in writings of this kind is the lack of "substance," so to speak, and the complete absence of usable details. On the other hand, the author, from beginning to end, makes the *Guru* speak in such a way that one wonders what idea he has of him, and Swami Siddheswarananda, in his preface, seems to have sensed that there is a rather unfortunate ambiguity here, which moreover he does not manage to dispel: it is certainly not a real human *Guru ,* and what is described cannot be considered a sufficiently advanced stage for the true "inner Guru" to manifest itself in this way; It is therefore likely that this "voice" represents in some way only the "idealized" memory of Vivekananda, or even, more simply, that it should be seen as only a "fiction" intended to express the thoughts that came to the author during his meditations.

- **Robert Pouyaud – *Under the Sign of the Spiral: Vézelay, center initiatory***

(Maurice Laballery Printing House, Clamecy).

This booklet contains many interesting observations on medieval architecture and its symbolic and esoteric character; but the author's overly exclusive admiration for the Romanesque style makes him quite unfair to the Gothic cathedral, which he sees as "only a philosophical expression tending towards humanist ends by reflecting the profane world"! It is true that the transition from Romanesque to Gothic must have corresponded to a change in conditions requiring "readaptation," but this took place in accordance with traditional principles; the deviation came only much later, and it coincided precisely with the decline of Gothic. In certain sections relating to more specialized topics, particularly numerical and astrological symbolism, it seems that the author tried to include too much that he could not develop in so few pages, which gives a somewhat confused impression. There are also some minor errors: for example, the winged Sphinx may be Greek, but it certainly has nothing in common with Egyptian tradition, where the Sphinx never consisted of anything other than a human head and a lion's body; as for supposing the existence of seven vowels (in what language?) to correspond to the seven planets, that seems to us like a purely modern fantasy…

As for Vézelay, it is regrettable that what is said about it in no way establishes that there was an initiatory center there, even a secondary one, since the reasons given would be just as valid for any other church of the same period; it would be necessary to prove that it was the actual seat of an initiatory organization, and this essential question is not even raised here. Moreover, it is not enough to refer to the Benedictine monks as "authors of the Vézelay basilica," which is highly debatable, especially concerning the esotericism that was incorporated into it; more precisely, if some of them played a part, it was not as monks, but as initiates into the art of building, which, while not incompatible, is something quite different. On another point of view, it is a pity that the text is not accompanied by

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some illustrations, without which some descriptions are really quite difficult to follow, especially for those who do not know Vézelay.

- **Noël de la Houssaye – *The Archaic Italiote Bronzes and their symbolic***

(Editions du Trident, Paris).

This study begins with considerations on the origins of coinage in the Mediterranean basin, a rather obscure question, and one for which, as with so many other things, it does not seem possible to trace it back beyond the 6th century BC. In any case, the author has clearly understood that "coinage was a sacred thing for the Ancients," contrary to the entirely secular conception held by modern scholars, and that this explains the nature of the symbols it bore; one could even go further, we believe, and see in these symbols the mark of control exercised by a spiritual authority. What follows, which concerns Rome and Italy more specifically, is much more hypothetical: the connection between the name of Aeneas and the Latin name for bronze, while not impossible, nevertheless seems quite debatable; And it is perhaps a very narrow interpretation of the legend of Aeneas to see in the various stages of his travels nothing other than the spread of bronze coinage; however important this may have been, it can only be considered a secondary event, undoubtedly linked to the whole of a tradition. In any case, what seems implausible to us is the idea that this legend of Aeneas could have any connection whatsoever with Atlantis: firstly, his travels, taking place from Asia Minor to Italy, obviously did not begin in the West; secondly, they refer to a period which, even if it cannot be determined with complete precision, is in any case several millennia after the disappearance of Atlantis; but this overly imaginative theory, as well as some linguistic fantasies which we will not dwell on, is probably attributable to the fact that the study in question first appeared in part in the journal *Atlantis…* The enumeration of the symbols appearing on the coins appears to have been made as completely as possible, and at the end of the work synoptic tables have been added allowing one to realize their distribution around the Mediterranean basin; but on the meaning of these symbols, there would certainly have been much more to say, and there are even some rather surprising gaps in this regard. Thus, we cannot understand how it can be said that the prow of a ship associated with the figure of Janus on *the* Roman as "concerns Saturn, and him alone", when it is quite well known that the ship or boat was one of the attributes of Janus himself: and it is also curious that, in relation to Saturn, one can call "pastoral era" what is in reality the "agricultural era", that is to say exactly the opposite, since the pastoralists are essentially the nomadic peoples, while the farmers are the sedentary peoples; how then could the "pastoral era" possibly coincide with the "formation of cities"?

What is said about the Dioscuri hardly clarifies their meaning, and the same goes for the Kabiri; but, above all, how is it that the author does not seem to have noticed

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that the symbolism of the latter is closely related to metallurgy, and even more specifically to copper, which would have had a completely direct connection with its subject?

• Noël de la Houssaye – The Phoenix, a symbolic poem

(Editions du Trident, Paris).

We are not qualified to judge a poem as such, but from a symbolic point of view, this one seems less clear than it would have been desirable, and even the essentially "cyclical" and "solar" character of the Phoenix myth does not emerge very clearly; as for the symbol of the egg, we confess that we have not been able to understand how it is conceived; the overall inspiration, despite the title, gives the impression of being more "philosophical" than symbolic. Furthermore, the author seems to seriously believe in the existence of a certain organization called the "Brethren of Heliopolis" and its connection to an Egyptian tradition; in Europe, people often have some very curious ideas about Egypt… Besides, is it really certain that the Phoenix was originally associated with Heliopolis in Egypt? There was also Heliopolis of Syria, and, if we note that Syria was not always solely the country which still bears this name today, this may bring us closer to the origins; the truth, in fact, is that these various "Cities of the Sun" of a relatively recent era were never anything but secondary images of the Hyperborean "solar Earth", and that thus, beyond all the derivative forms which are known "historically", the symbolism of the Phoenix is found directly attached to the primordial Tradition itself.

March-April 1946

• Robert Ambelain – *In the Shadow of the Cathedrals*

(Adyar Editions, Paris).

This book bears a rather ambitious subtitle: "A Study of the Architectural and Decorative Esotericism of Notre-Dame de Paris in its Relation to Hermetic Symbolism, Secret Doctrines, Astrology, Magic, and Alchemy." However, we must say at once that this is hardly justified by the content, for, in fact, it deals almost exclusively with magic, or at least, all the subjects addressed are, in a way, biased towards what one might call the magical perspective. Esotericism and even initiation are frequently mentioned; but this is because initiation itself is confused with magic, with which it actually has nothing to do. We have already explained this confusion sufficiently on other occasions so that our readers know what to make of it, but it will not be superfluous to reiterate.

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to dwell somewhat on what makes it particularly dangerous here. Indeed, the author's perspective is not entirely his own; one finds in it (and the book's dedication "to the memory of Fulcanelli" is undoubtedly a significant indication of this) traces of a certain initiation that can be called "perverted," of which we know of numerous examples from the Renaissance to the present day. Let us specify that this is, in principle, a Kshatriya initiation (or its Western equivalent), but one degenerated by the complete loss of its higher aspects, to the point of having lost all contact with the spiritual order, thus making possible all kinds of "infiltrations" of more or less dubious influences. It goes without saying that one of the first consequences of this degeneration is a "naturalism" pushed to the extreme. And it is necessary to link to this the "dualistic" assertions, as we note repeatedly in this work, where it is even claimed that "the four essential principles of Initiation" are "the existence of two contrary forces, two opposing poles, and their two results" (p. 256); if the fundamental unity is not absolutely denied, at least it is considered only as a mere possibility that should not be given further consideration, which is, in short, the expression of a distinctly "agnostic" attitude towards everything that falls within the metaphysical domain. Another consequence is "Luciferianism," made possible by this very dualism, and moreover inherent in a way to what can be called the "revolt of the Kshatriyas"; From this point of view, we will note in particular the importance given here to a certain version of the legend of Hiram, whose "source" is found in Gérard de Nerval: whether it is due only to the fantasy of the latter, or whether it is based, as he says, on some story which he had actually heard (and, in this case, it would probably belong to one of the heterodox sects of the Near East), it has in any case nothing in common with the authentic legend of Hiram of Freemasonry, and it has had, moreover, the rather unfortunate fate of becoming one of the "commonplaces" of anti-Masonry, which has seized upon it with intentions obviously quite different from those which make it use here, but to arrive in the end at the same result, that is to say, all question of appreciation aside, to attribute to initiation a "Luciferian" character. Let us also point out, from the same point of view, a kind of obsession with the color green, which is given on the one hand (p. 35) as "the Luciferian color" (probably because it is the color of Venus, which the Latins called *Lucifer* as "morning star") and on the other hand (p. 81) as "the color of Initiation," a connection from which it is easy to draw the conclusion; the effort that is made to give a special meaning to this color wherever it is found is also linked to various very strange stories that we had to deal with a few years ago… And do they not go so far as to assert, with a great appearance of seriousness, that the letters X and P of Constantine's Labarum owe all their importance to the fact that they are "the two pillars of the word *chlôros,* meaning green in Greek" (p. 73)? This brings us to another characteristic feature of our author's work: the use of the method known as "Hermetic Kabbalah" (it seems that in this case, one should write "Kabbalah" to distinguish it from the Kabbalah of the Hebrews), or even "Phonetic Kabbalah," which supposedly gave its name to "Kabbalism," in other words, to the

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Chivalry! We will no doubt remember that we have often had to point out the abuse of these verbal connections among certain overly imaginative writers, who are also quite unaware of what they can be used for when handled by more "informed" people, but what matters most is that these "wordplays" are nothing other than the distortion and like the caricature of a traditional method of interpretation based on a real phonetic symbolism, and which is similar to the Hindu *nirukta ;* Moreover, more generally, certain truths that nevertheless remain throughout all this are themselves presented in a way that completely distorts them, and sometimes even reverses their legitimate meaning… In any case, there are, it seems, great consequences to be drawn from the fact that “argot” is also called “green language” and that it is phonetically “Gothic art,” that is to say, not only the “Gothic art” of cathedrals, but also the “Goetic art” (p. 53), which we will now come to. Indeed, it is not even simply a question of magic here, but more properly of “black magic”; Doesn't the author himself declare that "all practical magic is and can only be satanic" (and he specifies that he means it in the sense that it belongs to the domain of the Egyptian Seth, who is, let's not forget, the "donkey-headed god"!) and that

“All magical works, however altruistic they may seem, fall under the category of what the uninitiated classify as black magic” (p. 147)? It is true that he elsewhere strives to explain these statements in a way that mitigates their scope, but where there is, intentionally or not, a great deal of confusion; in any case, what is certain is that, for him, “the magician of all times has dressed in black” and has used only black accessories, which seems to us historically inaccurate, but is nonetheless significant. It is understood that the color black has a metaphysical meaning, which we ourselves have explained, and which is entirely different from the “sinister” meaning it most commonly has; but, as this higher meaning is certainly far removed from the domain in which the magician’s activity is exercised, it cannot be discussed here. And the very way in which the author seeks to alter the traditionally accepted meaning of certain concepts, such as the "Black Sun" or the "Dark Satellite," is also highly suspect… The justification for the use of black candles (pp. 224-225) is hardly more felicitous; in our recollections (recollections that go back quite a long way, as this must date back nearly forty years), these black candles are more specifically linked to a story concerning a certain group, which is precisely what is discussed elsewhere (p. 243), and which is defended from the accusation of "Satanism" by saying that it "is simply an occult secret society, nothing more"; but, in our time, are there not many more or less consciously "Satanist" groups that are indeed nothing other than that? We could even cite at least

One of them explicitly claimed to be "Satanist," and an allusion we encountered somewhere in this book showed us that he was not unknown to the author; but then, what could be the purpose of this protest, which also aims to pass off such occult groups as "serious initiatory circles," which is a true mockery? We must also clarify that we do not intend to confuse "Luciferianism" and "Satanism"; these are two distinct things. However, the transition from one to the other risks being almost imperceptible, like a deviation pushed further and further that ultimately leads to...

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naturally leading to a complete reversal of the normal order; and it is not our fault if, in the case at hand, everything is so muddled that we never know exactly what we are dealing with… The applications made of “dualism” are far from coherent: thus, initiation, assimilated to magic as we have said, is opposed to religion, which does not prevent religious rites from subsequently being, through a reverse confusion, identified with magical rites; and, on the other hand, Judaism and Christianity, which undeniably both fall under the umbrella of religion, are nevertheless also opposed to each other; at what “poles”

How exactly do the two terms of these different oppositions correspond? It's not clear, especially since, while Christianity is interpreted in a "Naassene" sense (pp. 256-257), the God of Moses, for his part, is identified with the "Spirit of the Earth" (pp. 204-205), not to mention the more than equivocal insinuation that, in Moses' struggle against Pharaoh's magicians (p. 37), it might well have been Moses who played the role of the "black magician"! It would certainly be very difficult to unravel this chaos, but besides, it's by no means necessary to realize that the practices described in this book, without the reader ever being warned as the most basic prudence would require, are mostly very dangerous, and that some of them even fall more under the category of sorcery than anything else. Regarding the dangers in question, we will mention in particular the way in which divinatory practices are viewed, which are described as "almost always evocative practices" (p. 112). This hardly resembles the ancient traditional sciences, of which they are in reality only often misunderstood remnants, but the logical consequence is that "when one attempts divination, one necessarily puts oneself in a state of receptivity, of complete passivity" (p. 273). It is only too easy to understand the potentially disastrous results of such a method. The author displays a very marked predilection for geomancy, which he rather unfortunately compares to the "automatic writing" of spiritualists, and which appears to be for him a means of communicating with the "Spirit of the Earth." He has, moreover, a very special conception of it (p. 98), which, whatever he may say, is nothing more than the most typically Western “ceremonial magic,” for it is certainly not in the East that one has ever felt the need to indulge in so many charades, if one may express oneself thus, in order to practice geomancy…

Let us add further that, while he sometimes refuses, for reasons more or less obscure, to see the devil where he is, he also happens, on the other hand, to see him where he is not:
“Master Pierre de Coignet” (pp. 241-242), which was once seen at a corner of the rood screen of Notre-Dame, was not a figure of the devil, but simply a caricature of Pierre de Cugnières, Advocate General of the Parliament under Philip of Valois, detested by the clergy of his time for having, in an assembly held in 1329, opposed the expansion of the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts (see *Mémoire sur les Libertés de l'Église gallicane,* Amsterdam, 1755, pp. 240-

248); this means that it was certainly not the clergy who, in the 17th century, had an interest in making it disappear, as is claimed, but quite the contrary, the supporters of the supremacy of civil power, who could feel attacked by this permanent insult to the memory of their distant predecessor. There is therefore a rather gross misunderstanding here, and it is truly a pity, because it served the

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The author's intentions: "Pierre du Coignet" means "cornerstone" or "cornerstone," and elsewhere he writes that the devil "is truly the foundation and cornerstone of all the Theology" of the Catholic Church (p. 56), which is, admittedly, a peculiar way of interpreting the symbolism of the cornerstone; and here is a rather instructive example of what the abuses of the so-called "Hermetic Kabbalah" can lead to! There are also, it must be said, other errors whose reason for being is not as clear: for example, Valentin Andreae is given as the "pseudonym" of an "anonymous German author" (p. 24), whereas it is the real name of a man whose life and works are very well known; the Masonic degree of Knight Rose-Croix is the seventh and last of the French Rite, and not "the eighth" (p. 25), which never existed; It was Plato, not Pythagoras (p. 61), who had the words "Let no one enter here unless he is a geometer" inscribed on the front of his school; elsewhere, the feast of Saint John the Baptist is attributed to Saint John the Evangelist (p. 168), and it is even claimed that some significant consequences can be drawn from this... Besides these errors which can be called historical, there are linguistic errors which are no less curious: for example *rekabim,* which is moreover a plural word (but the plural of Hebrew words is constantly taken here for a singular), never meant "stick" (p. 11);

Emeth does not mean "life" (p. 124), but "truth," and *nephesh* is far from designating "pure spirit" (p. 153); *heth* is repeatedly mistaken for *heh,* which completely distorts the hieroglyphic analysis of the words in which it appears, as well as all the deductions that follow from it. Hebrew, moreover, is not the only language to be thus mistreated; we will pass over the numerous distorted words that could, at a stretch, be attributed to printers, although this is somewhat difficult when they reappear.

invariably in the same form; but one does not need to be a great Latinist to know that "Christ the King" is not said *Christum Rexus* (p. 283), or that *Omnia ab uno et in unum omnia* does not mean "One is in All and All in One"
(p. 21), but "Everything comes from Unity and returns to Unity." Some might perhaps be taken in by the appearances of a rather considerable "erudition" at first glance; but, as the examples we have just given sufficiently prove, these appearances are quite deceptive… Let no one be surprised that we have deemed it necessary to dwell at such length on this book and to go into such detail, for it is one of those that can only contribute to increasing disorder and confusion in the minds of many people, and that is why it is necessary to show as clearly as possible what lies beneath all this.

In conclusion, one could say, without any "pun intended," that the "shadow" mentioned in the title should undoubtedly be understood in its "sinister" and inverted sense; and this, it seems, is a foretaste of what the famous "Age of Aquarius" has in store for us.

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- **Charles Reynaud-Plense – *The True Centuries and Prophecies of Michel Nostradamus, the great seer of Salon, with his biography, and a Nostradamus glossary***

(Regional Printing, Salon).

This new edition of the "Centuries," whose excessively long title we are abbreviating, does not exactly shine in its presentation: the text is full of transcription errors (the letters ' *s'* and ' f', in particular, are constantly mistaken for one another); the biography that precedes it, accompanied by rather ill-advised illustrations, is as "external" as possible and does not even hint at all that is truly enigmatic in the life of Nostradamus;
and the volume, as a whole, has a certain air of "naivety" which seems to link it to the genre of what are conventionally called "popular publications". As for the "Nostradamus glossary" placed at the end, it could certainly be a very useful thing; But, while the author should be commended for rejecting some rather far-fetched fantasies from certain recent commentators (for example, *Hister,* the Latin name for the Danube, taken for *Hitler,* which is just as absurd as taking Piraeus for a man…), unfortunately, many highly questionable interpretations remain, especially concerning proper names, such as the city *of Achem,* which is not Jerusalem, as we have already pointed out in connection with another book, or *Annemarc,* which is much more Denmark than Carmania, or *Arda* and *Zerfas ,* which are explained separately, but which are in reality *Aredha-Tserphath,* an expression whose meaning in rabbinic geography Nostradamus, who was of Jewish origin, certainly knew; we believe that these few examples suffice to show that such a glossary should only be consulted with caution… And the whole thing ends, rather bizarrely, with a kind of “tourist” advertisement for Salon and its surroundings!

May 1946

- **D r Swinburne Clymer – *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America. Vol. II***

(“The Rosicrucian Foundation,” Quakertown, Pennsylvania).

We previously reviewed (April 1937 issue) the first volume published under this title; as for the second, which is truly enormous (nearly a thousand pages!), circumstances have not yet allowed us to discuss it. Dr. Clymer's principal adversary, *the Imperator* of AMORC, has since died, but this obviously does not detract from the interest this work presents from a particular point of view, since it is a typical case of pseudo-initiatory charlatanism, to which are added, as we have already explained,

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influences of an even more suspect nature. It must also be acknowledged that, as others have already noted, Dr. Clymer greatly harms his cause by too often employing slang and insulting language, which, to say the least, is utterly lacking in dignity; but this matters little to us, as we are in no way tempted to take sides in such a quarrel. Whatever one may think of the validity of his claims, his presentation is, in any case, quite instructive in several respects: it shows, among other things, how a lawyer can collude with the opposing party's lawyer to settle a case without the client's knowledge and to the detriment of the latter's interests; it is unfortunately likely that such practices are not unique to America! Moreover, let us reiterate in this regard, it is truly difficult to understand how organizations that call themselves initiatory can thus bring their disputes before a secular jurisdiction; Even if they are not actually so, it changes nothing in this instance, because, logically, they should at least behave as if they were what they claim to be. One of two things must happen: either the judge is himself a layman, and then he is incompetent by definition; or he is a Freemason, and, since Masonic matters are also mixed up in all these stories, he must, between his obligations of initiatory discretion and the duties of his public office, find himself in a rather false and singularly embarrassing situation… Regarding the questions we have just alluded to, we must note that Dr. Clymer has quite peculiar ideas about Masonic regularity: of two similarly irregular organizations, and moreover of the same origin, he has only praise for one, while he heaps insults and denunciations upon the other; The reason is quite simply that the first joined its own "Federation" and the second the rival "Federation." These rather petty motives don't, in truth, prevent the documentation concerning the latter, called FUDOSI, in other words *Federatio Universalis Dirigens Ordines Societatesque Initiationis* (what Latin!), from being, from the same perspective, one of the most interesting things in the entire book; how edifying the actions of these supposedly "fraternal" circles truly are! We found some old acquaintances there, including a few survivors of the old French occult movement, which seems reluctant to disappear entirely…

Naturally, there is also talk again of Theodor Reuss, alias "Frater Peregrinus", of Aleister Crowley and their OTO, not to mention many other characters (real and imaginary) and other groups of a no less strange character; all this, which cannot be summarized, constitutes an important collection of documents that should be consulted by anyone who proposes to write someday in detail the fantastic history of modern pseudo-initiations.

- ***Hermetic Treasure,* including *The Wordless Picture Book (Mutus Liber)* where all the operations of Hermetic philosophy are represented, reissued with an Introduction by Dr. Marc Haven, and *The Symbolic Treatise of the Stone***

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Philosopher's Stone in 78 Figures by Jean Conrad Barchusen, republished for the first time with a Preface by Paul Servant

(P. Derain, Lyon).

The full title, as we have just transcribed it, clearly indicates the contents of this volume, which presents itself as the first in a "collection of esoteric albums." It consists of two treatises composed entirely of illustrations, without any accompanying explanatory text. We highly recommend this re-edition to all enthusiasts of hermetic symbols, who will find ample material to exercise their ingenuity.

• A. Cockren – *Alchemy Rediscovered and Restored*

(Rider and Co., London).

The title of this small volume is rather ambitious, but, it must be said, the content hardly lives up to it; the author is clearly one of those who, conceiving of alchemy as purely "material," simply reduce it to a kind of special chemistry or, if you will, "hyperchemistry." The first part is a sort of summary of the history of alchemy, naturally interpreted in the sense we have just indicated; the two other parts, respectively theoretical and practical, contain "an exposition of the extraction of the seed of metals and the preparation of medicinal elixirs according to the practice of the Hermetic Art and the Alkahest of the Philosophers," or, we might say rather, according to the author's own understanding of it. The most interesting aspect of this, at least from a practical point of view, which is the only one that can be truly valid in such cases, is undoubtedly the medical application; The principle is not expressly stated, but it is easy to understand that it essentially involves treating the diseases of each organ with remedies derived from the metal whose astrological correspondence is the same as that of that organ; this can indeed give appreciable results, and it is evident that such medication, even if it cannot be called strictly alchemical, would nonetheless deserve to be seriously tested.

• Longfield Beatty – *The Garden of the Golden Flower*

(Rider and Co., London).

This book, whose very title is a clear allusion to CJ Jung's interpretation of The *Secret of the Golden Flower ,* is a characteristic example of the unfortunate influence exerted by psychoanalytic concepts on those who want to deal with symbolism without possessing sufficient traditional data.
Certainly, the author intends to go further than psychoanalysts and not limit himself to the domain they recognize; but he nonetheless regards Freud and his followers, and also Frazer on the other hand, as "undisputed authorities" in their field, which can only provide him with a very poor starting point. If the thesis were limited to considering two complementary principles, as well as their union and

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The result, and in seeking to find these three terms at the different "levels" he respectively calls "physical," "mystical" (?), and "spiritual," would certainly be uncontroversial, since this is indeed consistent with the teachings of all traditional cosmology; but then there would obviously be no need to resort to psychoanalysis, nor indeed to any psychological theories whatsoever. However, the influence of these theories, and also that of "totem" and "taboo," appears at every turn in the particular way in which these questions are treated; does not the author go so far as to make the "unconscious" the source of all symbolism, and the infamous "Oedipus complex" (whatever efforts he may make to "spiritualize" its meaning) the central point of all his explanations? His accounts of "solar heroes" and other "myths" and "legends," which form the greater part of the work, are, moreover, generally extremely confused, and he himself does not always seem very sure of their accuracy. One has the impression that he is trying to proceed by a series of successive approximations, without it being clear where they lead him. And the rather convoluted and often dubious correspondences he indicates in various tables (which he rather peculiarly calls "equations") hardly clarify his exposition. Furthermore, judging by the bibliography at the end of the book, his knowledge of the traditional doctrines themselves seems quite limited and too often derived from writings that are hardly trustworthy in this respect, such as those of the Theosophists (for example, The *Secret Doctrine* by Madame

Blavatsky, etc., *Esoteric Christianity,* by Mme Besant), or even *Mystical Qabbalah,* by Dion Fortune, which we discussed here previously (December 1937 issue)* ; his knowledge of the Far Eastern tradition seems to be limited almost entirely to Mears' *Creative Energy,* which is a "Christianized" and rather fanciful interpretation of the *Yi-King ;* all this is certainly quite insufficient, but, in fact, it is this very insufficiency that explains why he was so easily seduced by psychoanalysis… We will not dwell on it any longer, but we will nevertheless note that the strange idea of a female Antichrist, which he took from Leland *'s Gospel of the Witches* and to which he attributes a certain importance, since he returns to it several times, does not offer any better guarantees than the rest from an authentically traditional point of view!

• Pierre Lhermier – *The mysterious Count of Saint-Germain, Rosicrucian and diplomat*

(Colbert Publishers, Paris).

This book, published after the death of its author, is a rather superficial historical study which, in truth, does not shed much light on the "mystery" in question.
Mr. Lhermier first outlines the multiple hypotheses that have been put forward regarding

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* *[The Mystical Cabal.]*

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of the Count of Saint-Germain; he doesn't take a position on any of them, but seems nonetheless inclined to admit that he could have belonged to the Stuart family, or at least to their circle. One of the reasons he gives for this rests on a rather astonishing confusion: "Saint-Germain was a Rosicrucian," he writes verbatim, "that is to say, he belonged to Freemasonry of the Scottish Rite, with Catholic and Stuart leanings…". Should we point out that "Jacobite" Freemasonry was by no means the Scottish Rite and did not include any Rosicrucian degree, and also, furthermore, that this degree, despite its title, has nothing to do with Rosicrucianism, of which Saint-Germain was supposedly one of the last known representatives?

The greater part of the volume is devoted to a narrative interwoven with various anecdotes, recounting the travels during which the protagonist supposedly carried out secret missions for Louis XV related to various political and financial affairs. Even within this narrative, there are many dubious points, and this, in any case, is only the most superficial aspect of this enigmatic existence. It should be noted that, according to the author, certain extraordinary statements made by Saint-Germain, particularly concerning his claimed age, should in reality be attributed to a hoaxer named Gauve, who apparently impersonated him at the instigation of the Duke of Choiseul, who thereby sought to discredit a man he saw as a dangerous rival. We will pass over the identification of Saint-Germain with several other mysterious figures, as well as many other more or less hypothetical matters; but we must at least point out that he is credited, on the basis of some rather vague indications, with a kind of "pantheistic" and "materialistic" philosophy which certainly has nothing initiatory about it! In the last pages, the author returns to what he calls the "Rosicrucian sect", in a way which seems somewhat contradictory to the assertion we quoted above;

as he also talks about according to "sources" such as Mrs. Besant and F. Wittemans, or even Spencer Lewis, *Imperator* of AMORC, not to mention a certain "Fr. Syntheticus, occultist writer whose work is considered authoritative" (!), it is certainly no wonder that he has prodigiously confused notions on the subject, and that, even from the historical perspective he wishes to maintain, what he says bears little relation to the truth. This proves once again that a certain skepticism is not always the best safeguard against the danger of accepting the worst fantasies without question; some traditional knowledge, even of an elementary nature, would certainly be much more effective in this regard.

• G. de Chauteaurhin – *Bibliography of Martinism*

(Derain and Raclet, Lyon).

This bibliography (whose author appears to be very closely related to Mr. Gérard van Rijnberk, whose work on Martinès de Pasqually* we examined some time ago) includes under the common heading of

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* *[The enigma of Martinès de Pasqually* (May to July 1936).]

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“Martinism,” following the custom established mainly by contemporary occultists and their ignorance of 18th- century Masonic history, actually encompasses several quite different things: the Order of the Elected Cohens of Martinès de Pasqually, the Rectified Scottish Rite with J.-B. Willermoz, the mysticism of L.-
Cl. de Saint-Martin, and finally Martinism proper, that is to say, the recent organization founded by Papus. We believe it would have been preferable to divide it into sections corresponding to these different subjects, rather than into "works specifically devoted to Martinism" and "works in which Martinism is discussed incidentally," which could have been a simple subdivision of each of these sections; as for the "doctrinal sources" mentioned separately here, they are solely the writings of Martinès de Pasqually and L.-Cl. de Saint-Martin, and, in fact, there could hardly have been any others. It would also have been good to mark in some way, especially for recent works, a distinction between those that have either a Martinist or Masonic character, those that are, on the contrary, written in a spirit of hostility (these are mainly anti-Masonic works), and those that adopt a "neutral" and purely historical point of view; The reader could thus have recognized themselves much more easily. The list seems to us, on the whole, quite complete, although Stanislas de Guaita's *Initiation Discourse ,* which deserved to be included, is missing.
to find a place, in itself absent; but we really do not see very well what interest there was in including this improbable mystification called *The Devil in the 19th century* (without mentioning moreover the brochure entitled *The Devil and Occultism* which Papus wrote to respond to it), especially since, on the other hand, they neglected to cite *Lucifer Unmasked* by Jean Kostka (Jules Doinel), where Martinism is targeted much more directly.

June-July 1946

- **Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *Why exhibit Works of Art?***
  (Luzac and Co., London).

In this volume, Mr. Coomaraswamy has brought together various studies "on the traditional or normal view of art," some of which are already familiar to our readers. In the first, which gives its title to the book, the author first demonstrates the futility of exhibiting works by living artists in museums, which can only serve to satisfy their vanity or to provide them with a kind of free commercial "advertisement"; moreover, every object, of whatever kind, should normally be made for purposes that have nothing to do with such an exhibition. When, on the other hand, we are dealing with ancient or exotic objects, the question is entirely different, and we can then speak of an "educational" purpose, but only under certain conditions: what must be understood above all, in this regard, is the very point of view of those who created these works of art, which were by no means, for them, as for moderns, useless objects with no other value than that

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which results from an "aesthetic" appreciation, that is to say, a purely sentimental one. According to all traditional conceptions (and Plato's testimony is cited here in particular), a work of art truly deserved the name only if it was capable of simultaneously satisfying bodily and spiritual needs, that is, if it was at once a utilitarian object and a "support for contemplation." In such cases, it is always essentially a matter of representing invisible and intelligible forms, and not of imitating sensible things; the true model from which the artist works is an idea that he contemplates within himself. In other words, there is no real art except that which presents a symbolic meaning, and, in this sense, art is in a way the antithesis of what moderns understand by "visual education." On the other hand, the public should naturally be led to wonder why objects of comparable quality to those they see in museums are no longer in common use today, and thereby realize the profound decline implied by the current state of affairs, with the complete separation established between industrial production, which has absolutely nothing artistic about it, and art, which no longer has any real connection with life. Finally, it is essential, in order to understand works of art, not to interpret them in terms of modern Western psychology, and, in particular, to completely discard the "aesthetic" point of view with all that it entails, as well as the idea of meaningless "ornamentation," or even that of "inspiration" supposedly coming from external objects, which is, moreover, nothing but a gross misinterpretation quite characteristic of modern confusion; The role of a museum should not be to amuse the public or flatter its tastes, but to appeal to its understanding and show it what the truth and beauty of a work of art truly consist of. – The second chapter, " *The Christian and Oriental or True Philosophy of Art,"* the third, " *Is Art Superstition or a Way of Life ?"* and the fourth, " *What is the Use of Art anyway ?"* were previously published as separate pamphlets, which we reviewed at the time (see our issues of April and July 1937, November and December 1937, and January 1940). A note has been added to the second of these three studies, responding to a critic who had accused the author of advocating a "return to a past state of affairs," that of the Middle Ages, when in reality it was a "return to first principles," as if these principles could depend on a question of the times, and as if their truth were not essentially timeless! – In *Beauty and Truth,* which bears as its epigraph this quotation from Saint Thomas Aquinas: “ Ex *divina pulchritudine esse omnium derivatur ”* (From divine beauty all things are derived), the connection of beauty with the cognitive faculty, and consequently with wisdom and truth, is explained by referring primarily to the doctrines of the Christian Middle Ages; and its application is made to written works as well as to the architectural monuments of that period, the same principles being equally valid for all forms of traditional art. – We have already discussed *The Nature of Medieval Art* when it was published as an article (see the May 1940 issue). – *The Traditional Conception of Ideal Portraiture* first sets forth the distinction made, in Indian texts (Hindu and Buddhist), between the outward appearance of a man, with his individual characteristics, and the inner image of man, invisible to the physical eye, but accessible to the eye of contemplation; The latter is properly that of a "type" which corresponds to the spiritual essence of the being, and

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It is to this conception that all hieratic figurations relate, in which physical resemblance is in no way taken into consideration, to such an extent that often such "portraits" are barely distinguishable from divine images.
Next, Western texts making the same fundamental distinction are studied, from the Hermetic books and the Neoplatonists to Eckhart; in this regard, Mr. Coomaraswamy very rightly points out that the well-known Gospel text:
“He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9) cannot obviously be understood as referring to a physically visible human appearance, and consequently implies this same distinction. Medieval Christian art also presents hieratic figures quite comparable to those of India, and likewise devoid of individual characteristics; but the “naturalistic” and “humanistic” tendency, aiming solely at reproducing the physical likeness of man, begins to appear as early as the end of the 13th century (which is also, as we have explained on various occasions, the end of the true Middle Ages), and its gradual intensification is linked to the whole of modern degeneration. – Next comes *“The Nature of ‘Folklore’ and ‘Popular Art’,”* which is the English text of an article that appeared in this very journal (June 1937 issue). – Finally, the volume concludes with a note entitled “ Beauty *of Mathematics,”* concerning a work by Professor G.H. Hardy, * *A Mathematician’s Apology* *. This man, who seems to know only modern and "aesthetic" conceptions of art, therefore places the beauty of mathematics above that of art; but Mr. Coomaraswamy shows that, if he had known the traditional conceptions, he would have seen that it is of the same "intelligible" beauty.

that it is actually the case in both instances.

• Carlo Kerényi – *The ancient religion of its fundamental line*

Translation of Delio Cantimori (Nicola Zanichelli, Bologna).

This book is certainly far from being written from a traditional point of view, but it contains certain ideas that we may find interesting to examine more closely; and, first of all, it must be said that the author is quite right to insist on the error too frequently committed by those who, knowing only one form of civilization and having no awareness whatsoever of its limitations, claim to apply everywhere concepts that are valid only for their own environment. One might only wonder whether he himself is always perfectly free from this flaw:
Thus, for example, isn't it a perspective peculiar to modern Westerners to reduce "religion" (that is, in essence, tradition) to being merely one element of a civilization among others, even if we add—which is only a very inadequate corrective—that this element somehow permeates the entire civilization? In any case, his critique is entirely valid in itself, and particularly so with regard to a certain "psychology of religion"; but one would have to go much further in this direction than he does, and say that it will always be illusory to try to treat religion psychologically; that it has, among many other things, psychological effects is undeniable, but these effects in no way constitute religion itself. Religion is not a "system of psychic realities," even if we admit that they are

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not mere "subjective" illusions, because there correspond to them extra-psychic realities, "in the realm of the mind or in that of nature," it is nonetheless a reversal of the true relationships to take them here as a starting point; and we find here again the "humanist" postulate which is the fundamental error common to all "historians of religions." Another error no less serious is this: that "ancient religion" (by which we must understand here only that of the Greeks and Romans) is "well known as a religion of nature," that is to say, that it has become customary to consider it as such, does not in any way mean that this assertion is true; Whether one means by this a "veneration of misunderstood natural phenomena," and simply that his horizon was exclusively limited to the "cosmos," makes no difference, for it is the very idea that "natural religions" exist or can exist that is radically false and in formal opposition to the true notion of what has a properly traditional character, but, on the other hand, in perfect accord with all the anti-traditional prejudices of the modern mentality. Moreover, the author falls, without realizing it, into a rather significant contradiction; He acknowledges that, in everything he considers "religious," there is always a "spiritual content," but he fails to understand that precisely what is spiritual belongs as such to an order of reality that is beyond the "cosmos" (although we have seen him elsewhere make a distinction, which is hardly understandable under these circumstances, between "the realm of the spirit and that of nature"); and why should we suppose, as he seems to do at least implicitly, that the "supernatural" only deserves that name when it is conceived in a specifically Christian way? – Another important point concerns the conception of festivals: it is quite true that there are moments that have a particular "quality," both in the cosmic order and in the human order; but, when we say that, between these moments and the rest of existence, there is something like a "change of plane" and a discontinuity, this implies a distinction between the "sacred" and the "profane" which, far from being "primitive," corresponds only to a certain state of degeneration; in a completely traditional civilization, where everything has a "sacred" character, there can only be a simple difference of degree. What is true and interesting is the observation that every festival includes an element of "play," which is, moreover, like participation in the "free play of the gods" as it was in the "beginning"; but it should be added that play itself, understood in its true sense (which is not, contrary to what the author thinks, the profane sense given to it by moderns), originally has an essentially ritual character; and this alone allows us to explain that not only does it not exclude "seriousness," but that, on the contrary, it necessarily implies it as well as any other kind of rite (cf. on this subject the articles by Mr. Coomaraswamy, which we discuss elsewhere). – We will not go into the details of the philological discussions intended to define the characteristics of what is called the "Greek and Roman religious style"; we will only say that, in order to be To truly determine the primary meaning of certain terms without reducing them to their most superficial aspects would require knowledge beyond that of lay linguists… The considerations on *Theôria,* culminating in characterizing the Greek attitude as a “religion of vision,” are not without interest; but frankly, we do not see what is so important about them.

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especially Greek in its assimilation of knowledge to a "vision," or in its view of the sensible world as a set of symbols through which it is possible to perceive another order of reality (but why should this never extend beyond the limits of the "cosmos"?); all this (and also the symbolism of the "divine gaze") is found, in short, in all traditions, and, moreover, the affirmation of a connection between the corporeal and the spiritual can only seem extraordinary to moderns. On the other hand, when one defines *religio*
Roman by observing a "world of signs," which is to be distinguished from a "world of symbols" in that these signs, instead of having a timeless character and a value of pure knowledge, would only have a purely practical and somewhat "divinatory" scope, we wonder if such a conception is not too narrow, and also if there is not something a little artificial in speaking in this regard of a "hearing" that would be opposed to "vision." In fact, the two symbolisms of vision and hearing equally belong to the universal tradition, and, although this or that people may certainly have developed one in preference to the other, they are so far from being mutually exclusive that they are sometimes found closely united (thus, the *Rishis* are properly "seers," and yet they have "heard" the *Veda) ;* And likewise, while it is true that the Greeks placed greater emphasis on spatial representations and the Romans on temporal ones, this can only be a matter of proportion, and one must be careful not to oversimplify. – The author then examines worship, considered as an expression of humanity's relationship with the Divine; he acknowledges the limitation (perhaps one should rather say the complete atrophy) of certain faculties in modern people, who, for this very reason, take it for a simple matter of "faith"

(in the vulgar sense of belief) which was for the ancients a true "experience" (and, we might add, an experience quite different from "psychological"). On things such as the "divine presence," the "reality of the golden age," the opposition of the "divine spirit" (identical to *nous)* and the "titanic spirit," there are some very noteworthy views, but whose conclusions unfortunately remain rather vague and, we would readily say, more "literary" than truly "technical." As for the Romans, the very limited role of myth, at least prior to Greek influence, gives full prominence to the "cultic" aspect; and, in this regard, there would have been much to say about the notion of the action performed as *a rite* (cf. the Sanskrit *rita),* which is far from being reducible, as some have believed, to a purely "legal" conception (a conception which would rather, conversely, be a kind of degeneration of this very notion); but, here again, we sense the lack of direct and effective knowledge of the rites (we do not mean, of course, Roman or Greek rites in particular, since they belong to traditional forms that have disappeared, but simply rites in general).

On the other hand, the life of the *Flamen Dialis,* which is described in detail, is a remarkable example of an existence that remained entirely traditional in a milieu that had already become secular to a considerable extent; it is this contrast that makes it seem so strange, and yet, although this is evidently lost on the author, it is precisely this type of existence, where everything has symbolic value, that should be considered truly "normal." We cannot extend these remarks indefinitely, and although other points would undoubtedly have deserved to be addressed,

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Having already mentioned them, we will simply add that an appendix containing speculations on non-existence, strongly inspired by certain contemporary philosophical theories, hardly seems to us capable of elucidating, as it claims to do, the ideas of the ancients on death, which were certainly much less "simplistic" than those of the moderns: but how can we make the latter understand that what does not fall under the bodily senses can nevertheless be the object of perfectly real knowledge and which has absolutely nothing in common with simple "psychological" daydreams?

August 1946

- **Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *Hinduism and Buddhism***

(Philosophical Library, New York).

This work is divided into two somewhat parallel parts, the first relating to Hinduism and the second to Buddhism, although the author believes it might have been better to treat them as a single subject, in order to highlight even more the real concordance between the two. He first very rightly points out that one could in some way give a faithful exposition of Hinduism by categorically denying most of the assertions made about it by Western scholars, or even by some modern and Westernized Hindus. He then clarifies what "myth" is understood in its true sense, and conceived as essentially valid outside of any particular condition of time and space: *agrê,* "in the beginning," means even more precisely "at the summit," that is to say, "in the first cause" or "in the Principle" (like the Greek *en archê* and the Latin *in principio) ;* In any symbolic description of the cosmogonic process, it is therefore truly a question of a timeless "beginning." Sacrifice *(yajna)* is a ritual imitation of "what was done by the Gods in the beginning"; it is thus like a reflection of the "myth," moreover inverted like all reflections, in the sense that what had been a process of generation and division now becomes a process of regeneration and reintegration. To understand this operation, one must first ask "what God is" and "what we are": God is an Essence without duality *(adwaita),* but which subsists in a dual nature, hence the distinction between the "Supreme" *(para)* and the "Non-Supreme" *(apara),* to which correspond, from various points of view, all dualities in which one term, being subordinate to the other, is "eminently" contained within it; and we also find these two terms within ourselves, which are then the "Self" and the "ego." The essential function of Sacrifice is to "reunite what has been separated," thus, in the case of man, to bring the "ego" back to the "Self"; this reunion is often symbolically represented as a marriage, the superior term of such a duality being masculine and the inferior term feminine in relation to each other.

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Moreover, it must not be forgotten that, from a purely traditional point of view, every action should normally be considered "sacred," that is, as having a "sacrificial" character (from *sacra facere),* so that, by this means, the notion of Sacrifice can be extended to the whole of human life; and this is precisely what the "path of works" *(karma mârga)* of the *Bhagavad-Gita consists of,* which is naturally the opposite of the secular conception of moderns. On the other hand, Sacrifice, being performed *in divinis* by *Vishwakarma,* requires, in its ritual imitation in this world, a cooperation of all the arts *(vishwâ karmâni),* from which it follows that, in the traditional social order, all functions, whatever they may be, also take on a sacred character; but, at the same time, neither social organization nor works can be considered an end in itself, and it must be such that it makes it possible for each of its members to realize their own perfection: this is what corresponds, in Hinduism, to the institution of the four *ashramas,* by which everything is ordered with a view to obtaining the final Liberation.

– Turning then to Buddhism, Mr. Coomaraswamy observes that it seems to differ all the more from Hinduism the more superficially it is studied, and that, as one delves deeper into it, it becomes increasingly difficult to pinpoint the differences; and one could say that, in the West, “Buddhism has been admired above all for what it is not.” The Buddha himself, moreover, never claimed to teach a new doctrine, nor, in the precepts he gave to his “lay” listeners, to preach a “social reform”; in fact, the essence of his teaching was addressed to the members of a “monastic order,” within which no social distinction could subsist, since these were men who had already renounced the world, like the *sannyasis* of Hinduism. Here, the "myth" is represented by the very "life" of the Buddha, who offers all the traits of *the Avatar* before which individual particularities have been entirely effaced; the majority of moderns have supposed, according to this, that it was a man who was later "divinized", but this "euhemeristic" conception is contrary to the truth: what emerges from all the authentic texts is that it is on the contrary the "descent" of a celestial Archetype taking on a human form, and whose "birth" and "awakening" represent, one might say, timeless events. Regarding doctrine, Mr. Coomaraswamy focuses particularly on demonstrating the falsity of the interpretation according to which the Buddha denied *the Atma :* when, speaking of individual, contingent, and transient modifications, he said, against those who identify their very being with these accidents (and among whom he would certainly have included Descartes with his *Cogito ergo sum),* that "this is not the Self," it is understood as if he had said that "there is no Self"; and this is all the more absurd since he himself, in his state as Buddha, cannot be conceived other than as identical to the "Self." We cannot go into further detail, but we must at least point out an excellent interpretation of the term *Nirvana ;* this is yet another question that is indeed in great need of clarification, after all the confusion introduced into it by Orientalists. Another point of great interest is this: the names and epithets of the Buddha, in general, as well as his actions, are the very same ones that Vedic tradition attributes more specifically to *Agni* and *Indra,* to whom the designation *of Arhat* is also very often applied; now, *Agni* and *Indra* are

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respectively the Priesthood and the *Divine* Kingship ; it is precisely with these two possibilities that the Buddha was born, and it can be said that, in choosing the first, he realized them both, for this is one of the cases where, as mentioned above, one of the two terms is "eminently" contained in the other. – We have learned that a French translation of this important work is currently in preparation and it is to be hoped that it will soon be published.

- **Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government***

(American Oriental Society, New Haven, Connecticut).

In this other book, where we find, developed, clarified, and supported by numerous references, some of the considerations already indicated in the previous one, Mr. Coomaraswamy corrects an error made by some, notably J. Evola and AM Hocart, concerning the relationship between the Priesthood and the Kingship. These authors, in fact, claimed that the Priesthood had a feminine role in relation to the Kingship, which naturally tends to attribute supremacy to the latter; but this is a complete reversal of the actual hierarchical order. In fact, the relationship in question is ritually expressed by marriage formulas such as this one: "I am That, you are This; I am Heaven, you are Earth," etc. *(Aitareya Brâhmana* VIII, 27); But it is the *Purohita,* that is, the Brahmin, who addresses these words to the King during the coronation *(rajasuya),* and not the other way around, as has been wrongly claimed. This is one of those pairs whose two terms are by no means symmetrical, the first containing in principle the second, while the latter is subordinate to the former and ultimately exists only through it (which amounts to saying that they are relatively *sat* and *asat) ;* this is why the Priesthood is absolutely independent of Kingship, while Kingship cannot validly exist without the Priesthood. This is further confirmed by examining the relationships between their divine types: *Agni,* who is the Priesthood *(brahma),* and *Indra,* who is Kingship *(kshatra),* or *Mitra* and *Varuna,* who are also in a similar relationship; Similarly, *Brihaspati* and *Vâch,* that is to say, in short, Intellect and Word, corresponding here respectively to contemplation and action. This last point calls for an important remark: if the Word is referred to Kingship, it is because, indeed, it is by his orders or edicts that the King acts and "works", and, in a traditional society, things are normally accomplished as soon as they have been formulated by the one who has the power (and one can compare this to the fact that, in the Far Eastern tradition, it belongs to the sovereign to give things their "correct names"), so the King can never speak according to his fancy or desires, but he must do so only in accordance with the order, that is to say, with the will of the principle from which he derives his legitimacy and his "divine right"; We can see how far removed this essentially theocratic conception is from that of an "absolute monarchy" whose only rule of action is the sovereign's "good pleasure." The author also incidentally examines many other couples of the same kind, such as, for example, *Yama* and *Yami,* the *Ashwins* (comparable in some respects to the Greek Dioscuri), and also couples like *Krishna* and

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of Arjuna, formed of an immortal and a mortal, which naturally corresponds to *Paramatma* and *Jivatma,* or the "Self" and the "I." Another interesting case, in a somewhat different order, is that of Harmony *(sama)* and Words *(rich)* in the science of *mantras ;* but it is impossible to summarize all this, and even to completely enumerate all the questions thus treated in notes, some of which have the importance of veritable specialized studies. To return to the main subject, the union of the Priesthood and the Kingship represents above all that of Heaven and Earth, on whose harmony depends the prosperity and fertility of the entire Universe; this is why the prosperity of the kingdom also depends on the harmony of the two powers and their union in the performance of the rite, and the King, whose essential function is to ensure it, can only do so on the condition of acting in such a way as to always maintain this harmony; Here we find the correspondence between the cosmic order and the human order which is unanimously affirmed by all traditions.

On the other hand, the feminine character of Royalty with regard to Priesthood explains what we ourselves have indicated, as Mr. Coomaraswamy recalls, that a feminine element, or one symbolically represented as such, most often plays a preponderant role in the doctrines proper to the Kshatriyas; and it also explains that a path of *bhakti* is more particularly appropriate to the nature of the latter, as can still be seen very clearly in a case such as that of Western Chivalry. However, it should not be forgotten that, since all this is about relationships, what is feminine in one respect can be masculine in another respect: thus, if the Priesthood is masculine in relation to the Kingship, the King is in turn masculine in relation to his kingdom, just as every principle is masculine in relation to the domain on which its action is exercised, and in particular *Agni, Vâyu* and *Âditya* in relation to the "three worlds" respectively, relationships which are moreover only so many particularizations of that of Light to the Cosmos. It must also be added that, besides its cosmic *(adhidêvata)* and political *(adhirâjya)* aspects , the same doctrine also has an application to the "microcosmic" *(adhyâtma) order,* because man himself is the "Divine City," and in him are found all the constituent elements corresponding to those of the Cosmos and to those of social organization, so that, between these elements, similar relationships must be observed in all cases. The two *âtmâs,* that is to say the "Self" and the "ego," correspond to the dual "supreme" and "non-supreme" nature of *Brahma,* and consequently, at different levels, to *Mitra* and *Varuna,* to the *Dêva* and *the Asura,* to the *brahma* and the *kshatra,* by whose union the kingdom is maintained; “The external, active, feminine, and mortal aspect of our nature subsists more eminently in its internal, contemplative, masculine, and immortal aspect, to which it can and must be ‘reduced,’ that is, brought back or reunited.” “Autonomy” *(swarâj)* consists, for a king, in not allowing himself to be governed by the multitude of those who must be subordinate to him, and likewise, for each individual, in not allowing himself to be governed by the inferior and contingent elements of his being; hence, for the establishment and maintenance of order in both cases, the two meanings of the “holy war” we have discussed on various occasions. Ultimately, in all domains, everything essentially depends on “self-control” *(âtmâsamyama) ;* this is why, according to the teachings of all traditions, man must first and foremost “know himself,” and, at the same time, the “science of the Self” *(âtmavidyâ)* is also

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the final term of any doctrine, because "what the Self is" and "what *Brahma* is " are two questions that truly have only one and the same answer.

September 1946

- **Georges Margouliès – *The Chinese Language and Writing***

(Payot, Paris).

This book is highly recommended reading for anyone interested in means of expression specific to the Far Eastern tradition, for there are considerations here whose "interest far exceeds the bounds of a simple linguistic study," as the author very rightly states, who has fortunately managed to free himself from the prejudices against the use of a monosyllabic language and especially against that of an ideographic script, which most sinologists share with other Westerners. On the contrary, he highlights not only the consequences that such a different mode of expression entails in various fields, but also the advantages it offers in many respects. With regard to language, he denounces both the error of Europeans who claimed that Chinese has no grammar, and that of certain modern Chinese authors who, under Western influence, have sought to establish a grammar modeled on those of other languages. Regarding grammar, we will only allow ourselves a brief remark: we do not quite understand why what should more normally be called "morphology" is called "etymology," and this seems all the more unfortunate to us since, in fact, the monosyllabic and invariable nature of Chinese words leaves no room for etymological considerations properly speaking; at least, if one wanted to speak of etymology, this term should rather be reserved for the study of the formation and composition of characters. Nor do we understand why mental images that are outwardly translated into words, but which themselves, being "stripped of any particular sound," are certainly not words, are called "abstract words"—an expression that usually has a completely different meaning. It is nonetheless true, moreover, that ideographic writing is directly linked to these mental images, "without needing to pass through the intermediary of sound language as phonetic writing does," so that, in this case, the visual and auditory forms of language, although corresponding, are not derived from one another; this, moreover, is what allows people who do not speak the same language to understand each other thanks to a common ideographic script. Furthermore, ideograms have an importance for written language that phonetic writing cannot have; and, by the very fact that they convey the meaning of words independently of their sound, they ensure for this written language a fixity that could not exist elsewhere. We cannot consider summarizing here the discussions concerning questions such as the logical formation of characters and their specific expressive value, or the influence of the Chinese language and writing system.

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in the literary, historical, social, cultural, and psychological fields; perhaps there are some reservations to be made on a few points (for example, there seems to be a tendency to forget somewhat too easily that a people's language, before influencing its mentality, is first and foremost an expression of that same mentality, and also that, consequently, the correspondence or parallelism existing between the characteristics of the language and those of social institutions does not always necessarily imply an influence of the former on the latter), but all of this certainly deserves to be read in its entirety. The idea that, "possessing a perfect instrument of thought in their own language, further reinforced by the properties of ideographic writing, Chinese thinkers felt no need to develop the mathematical method" warrants closer examination; there may be some truth to this, especially if one conceives of mathematics in the manner of modern Westerners; But on the other hand, if we are talking about traditional mathematics, we must nevertheless acknowledge that, in particular, the use of numerical symbolism is just as developed in China as elsewhere, and that, in this respect at least, the Chinese are actually much closer to Pythagoras than the author seems to believe. The work concludes with an examination of the "problem of an international language": given the impossibility of inventing an artificial language as some have attempted in our time, the only acceptable solution would be "to find a written language that is unique to each individual while remaining comprehensible to everyone else," which can only be made possible by the use of an ideographic script; this is perfectly sound in principle, but it unfortunately seems highly doubtful to us that one could practically find a way to adapt such a solution to the specific conditions of the current Western mentality.

• Marcel Granet – *Marital categories and close relationships in ancient China*

(Félix Alcan, Paris).

This work will undoubtedly disappoint those who have read the same author's **Chinese Thought* *, where the serious reservations one had to make about the interpretations at least did not detract from the importance and interest of the documentation. Here, Mr.
Granet, increasingly fascinated by the "sociological" perspective, set out "to show that, in ancient China, with regard to marriage, or at least certain marriages, things proceeded as if individuals were divided into categories indicative of their matrimonial destiny." This is a question that may seem too limited in scope to be addressed in such a large volume; it is not that certain points, such as the prohibitions relating to shared names and ancestral worship, do not deserve to be studied, but only on the condition of adopting the traditional perspective, which alone would allow for a true explanation; and this is certainly not the case here, where the aim seems to be to ultimately reduce everything to questions of "services" or exchanges of a quasi-commercial nature! The author gets lost in endless details, and his exposition, which is already extraordinarily complicated in itself, is made even more difficult to follow by the use of special legal terms which

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Not everyone is obliged to know the meaning. Nothing truly essential emerges from all this, and, to give an idea, we will quote a few lines from the conclusions: "1° The Chinese have a sort of division of

Communities in four categories. This organization corresponded to a system of matrimonial alliances governed by the dual rules of exogamy and parallelism; the alliances, renewed with each generation, were concluded between two exchange-based sections; they were total and doubled; the two sections of the community, together, formed a closed group. – 2° The system of doubled alliances was succeeded by a system of one-way alliances. Still governed by the dual rules of exogamy and parallelism, it corresponds to a distribution of community members into eight categories, the four categories of each of the two sections being divided into two couples… » We believe this is sufficient to understand how the subject is treated; and what a waste of work to arrive at such insignificant results!

- **Liou Tse Houa –** ***The Cosmology of the Pa Koua and Astronomy modern***

(Jouve et Cie, Paris).

The title of this book sufficiently indicates the point of view from which the author takes it, especially if one adds the subtitles which further clarify it: "Embryonic situation of the Sun and the Moon; prediction of a new planet; exposition of the universal scientific system concerning the genesis and evolution of worlds".
Until now, we had mostly seen Japanese people engaging in this kind of speculation, where they strive to interpret traditional data through considerations drawn from modern science; but this time, it involves a Chinese person, and one who is apparently quite "Westernized." This is certainly not to say that the symbols of the *I Ching*
may not be susceptible to astronomical application, as well as to a great many others; but this specific application (which Philastre perhaps had a little too exclusively in mind when making his translation) itself has nothing to do with current scientific conceptions, and we have already often expressed our opinion of the futility of this kind of comparison, which stems primarily from a misunderstanding of the profound difference between traditional and secular science. It must be acknowledged that the author displayed great ingenuity in compiling the numerous tables that accompany his text; however, this is not enough to persuade us that he has made, as he himself seems to believe, a truly "sensational" discovery destined to mark an era in the history of science. What is rather curious is that the introduction and the conclusion, and they alone, contain some views in keeping with the traditional spirit, which hardly agree with the rest of the work and do not appear to be integral to it at all; We will certainly not attempt to explain this peculiarity.

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• Louis Chochod – *Huê the Mysterious*

(Mercure de France, Paris).

Despite its title, this book is not solely concerned with the capital of Annam, and, alongside chapters of purely local interest (some, even, at the end, relate only to industrial matters that are certainly not "mysterious"), there are others of a much broader scope, as they deal with certain aspects of Far Eastern tradition. Unfortunately, the author, instead of providing an explanation based on authentic data, presents little more than his "personal" interpretation, which is obviously of much less interest, except perhaps in his own eyes; and, from the outset, one can see that he almost entirely confuses the viewpoint of traditional cosmology with that of modern physics, and also that he has no idea what metaphysics is. There are, however, some valid indications on matters such as cyclical periods, the calendar, and festivals, but from which he draws no significant conclusions. We should add that the transcription of the words in their Annamese form is somewhat confusing for those accustomed to the Chinese form, who are obliged to make a considerable effort to recognize them. As for his "attempt at a rational interpretation" of what he rather bizarrely calls the "clavicle of Phuoc-Hi," that is, the trigrams of the *Yi-King,* it is really nothing more than a simple curiosity, and his supposed "graphic esotericism" contains no truly profound meaning; we will see later, in connection with another work, where the idea came from, and for the moment, we will simply note that the way he speaks of "magic keys" and a certain "transcendent magic" that he believes he can identify with "Theurgy" is no more than the "rationalization" itself of the symbols, of a nature to inspire confidence in those who have even a slightly precise understanding of all this. We will pass over the rest, much of which, being of a rather "folkloric" character, does not call for any special remark; but why did we feel the need to insert, in the middle of all this, a kind of "pastiche" teeming with anachronisms and other implausibilities, and whose presentation, with details about the manuscript from which it is supposed to have been taken, can only risk making those who will not be fooled by this literary fantasy doubt the seriousness of the book?

• Louis Chochod – *Occultism and Magic in the Far East*

(Payot, Paris).

It is clear that the word "occultism" cannot be taken here in its proper sense; the author applies it indiscriminately to any doctrine that "studies the sciences hidden from the profane," which is extremely vague. He should be commended for admitting original monotheism, contrary to common prejudices, and also for considering magic as something entirely different from religion; but, besides this, what confusion and misunderstandings! He makes a distinction between ordinary magic, which he seems to reduce a little too much to that degenerate form of sorcery, and a

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"High magic," the nature of which he does not explain very clearly; but everything becomes clear, including the "graphic esotericism" that we already encountered in his previous work, as soon as we understand that, fundamentally, he was inspired primarily by PV Piobb and his *Formulary of High Magic.* We are all too familiar, in fact, with this tendency to reduce symbols to nothing more than a kind of "memory aid" of a more or less cryptographic nature, or schematic formulas of "operations" that the author apparently conceives as not very different from those of modern experimental sciences: here, we fall back into one of the varieties of occultism proper, and this certainly has nothing Far Eastern about it… The first two chapters, devoted to India, are totally incomprehensible, and even, it must be said, frankly bad; Indeed, not only does the author rely on the opinions of Orientalists, while expressing some surprise that they so often disagree among themselves, but, when he comes to speak of the present day, he readily and even complacently accepts even the most odious calumnies launched by certain Westerners against India and its traditions. Let us not dwell on this further, and simply express our regret that this section was written, as it was all the less necessary given that the inclusion of India in the Far East is utterly unjustifiable from every point of view. The rest, which concerns China and Indochina, is better in many respects, because, there at least, the author was able to have direct, albeit naturally very "external," experience. Moreover, it is essential, of course, to take care to distinguish between the facts he reports and the particular interpretations whose origin we have indicated. It also contains a few too many considerations that duplicate those already presented in *Huê la Mystérieuse.* The volume concludes with a chapter on "Caodaism," containing curious historical information about this sect of very recent origin, which is essentially a derivative of Western spiritualism imported into Indochina; it also appears that, despite the numerous schisms that have occurred within it, the sect in question is unfortunately only spreading more and more, to the great detriment of all traditional ideas; this is certainly a very typical product of European influence!

October-November 1946

- **Albert Lantoine – *Current Secret Societies in Europe and in America***

(Presses Universitaires de France, Paris).

This small volume, which was ready for publication in 1940 but whose release was delayed by five years due to events, is part of a collection clearly intended for the "general public," which explains its somewhat superficial nature. It does, however, contain a very commendable distinction between "societies"

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"secret initiatory societies" and "secret political societies", hence its division into two parts "having nothing in common between them except the similarity of their labels". As for saying that the former are distinguished from the others by the fact that "solidarity is not of a sentimental order, but of a spiritual order," this is certainly true, but insufficient, especially since the "spiritual" seems to be conceived here only as a simple matter of "thought," which is far removed from the true initiatory perspective; in any case, the question is much more complex in fact, and we will allow ourselves to refer to what we have said on the subject in our *Insights on Initiation.* (Chapter XII). On the other hand, it is absolutely impossible for us to share certain views on a supposed opposition between religion and anything of a secret nature in general, and initiatory in particular; a clear distinction between exotericism and esotericism suffices to put everything in its proper place and to eliminate any opposition, for the truth is that these are two entirely different domains. The first part begins with a short chapter on "small initiatory societies," the absence of which would not have detracted from the work, since the few details it contains are drawn from very secular sources, and, moreover, it contains a rather unfortunate sentence that seems to admit the claims of pseudo-initiatory organizations of all kinds: it is certainly not because a group practices a simulacrum or a parody of initiation that it has "the right to call itself initiatory"! Let us add immediately that the chapter on the Guilds, while not containing any inaccuracies, is also regrettably inadequate; is it because it is viewed as a "thing of the past," and therefore "outdated," that it was not deemed appropriate to devote more space to it in this book? The most interesting and best-executed section is certainly the summary of the history of Freemasonry in Europe, and more specifically in France, which is easily understood, since this is, in a way, the author's "specialty"; but the section concerning its origins is terribly simplified; and why this persistent fear of going back beyond 1717? As for American Freemasonry, it is clear that the author has only a rather incomplete understanding of it. For the higher degrees, in particular, he seems to ignore even the existence of anything other than the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, which is far from being the most widespread in Anglo-Saxon countries… This book also contains, for America, some historical information on the *Odd Fellows* and the *Knights of Pythias,* as well as on certain Black associations whose nature is rather poorly defined: here again, we find the unfortunate tendency to believe that it is enough for the admission of members to be accompanied by “ceremonies” for it to be permissible to speak of initiation. – The second part, devoted to “political secret societies,” reviews, for Europe, the Irish societies, the *Comitadjis* of Macedonia, the *Ustaše* of Croatia; For America, the "Knights of Columbus," the "Order of the Hibernians," the *Ku Klux Klan* (about which very little is said), Jewish societies, and a few other lesser organizations. – The conclusion has a "detached," even somewhat skeptical, tone, which is rather disappointing; but, all things considered, it is perhaps almost inevitable that this should be the case with those who, given the current state of Western initiatory organizations, have not succeeded in discovering what initiation truly is.

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• **John Charpentier – *The Order of the Templars***

('La Colombe', Paris).

The author of this book previously published several novels in which he casts the Templars, or their real or supposed successors, in roles that seem to reflect rather peculiar ideas on the subject; we therefore feared finding similar fantasies here, but fortunately this is not the case: this time it is a seriously conducted historical study, which is certainly much better. The only regrettable aspect, and all the more so since it is the most interesting part of the matter, is that it is almost impossible to understand the author's exact thinking regarding the esotericism of the Templars: originally, there was supposedly "no esotericism" among them (but didn't chivalry itself, generally speaking, have a certain initiatory character?); it would therefore have been introduced later, but where did it come from?

From the East, no doubt; yet, from their relations with the Ismailis, they would have gained little more than the idea of a certain hierarchy of ranks (which, moreover, seems to be confused here with functions) and that of a "pacifist universalism" *(sic)* which is perhaps, in fact, the conception of the Empire as Dante expounded it. In discussing the question of the alleged "heresy" of the Templars, Mr. Charpentier makes extensive use of the articles by Messrs. Probst-Biraben and Maitrot de la Motte-Capron: as we have already examined these in detail (October-November 1945 issue)[*], we will not return to them. He does not believe that they were truly heretics, but he admits that they may have been "gnostic"; He also very rightly points out, in this regard, that "under this label are gathered many disparate notions, unrelated to one another, and sometimes even irreconcilable," and that, moreover, "we possess little information about Gnosticism other than that provided by its adversaries." But here is where things become strangely complicated: on the one hand, it is to Valentinian Gnosticism that "the Templars are distantly linked"; on the other hand, "to speak of the Gnosticism of the Templars, there would have to have been an active Gnosis in the time when they lived," which is not the case. Furthermore, it could not have been a doctrine, since "no conclusive evidence of it has been collected," and the Templars "only acted as propagandists for social and political ideas based on solidarity."

Yet, there was supposedly an oral transmission among them (but what did it concern?); ultimately, it turns out they possessed an esotericism of Pythagorean origin, without anyone being able to guess where or how they received it; it's truly very difficult to make sense of it all! We also don't quite understand how one can think that "Johannism" proceeds not from Saint John the Evangelist, but from Saint John the Baptist; but, as for Pythagoreanism, we would point out that it is perhaps in the Templars' relations with the builders' guilds (which are only mentioned here incidentally) that one might find the key to the enigma… In a final chapter, there is talk of the

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[*] [Articles published in the *Mercure de France.]*

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Templar Freemasonry, which is "liquidated" in a truly summary fashion (and let us note in passing the curious slip that led to "Magnus Grecus" being written for "Naymus Grecus"), then the Neo-Templars of Fabré-Palaprat; and here we experienced a great deal of astonishment at seeing ourselves named among those who "endorsed the theory that Larménius was indeed the legitimate successor of Molay"! Now, as far as we can recall, we have never written a single word on this question anywhere; and, in any case, we would be all the less inclined to support this theory since we are not even at all certain that the said Larménius actually existed, because we consider extremely suspect anything (including the "secret alphabet") that comes from a Neo-Templar source; we hope that this correction will be taken into account at some point.

• Jean Mallinger – *Pythagoras and the Mysteries*

(Niclaus Editions, Paris).

Knowing that the author of this book was one of the promoters of FUDOSI, which we have had occasion to discuss recently (May 1946 issue)[*], certain things which might otherwise seem rather enigmatic are illuminated in a very particular light. Thus, the dedication to the memory of the head of the "Pythagoreans of Belgium" is easily explained; these, in fact, are constituted in an "Order of Hermes Trismegistus" (a name which certainly has nothing specifically Pythagorean about it), which was one of the first to adhere to the aforementioned FUDOSI. Thus again, what is normally called the "primordial state" is called here the "ancient and primitive state"; now this is not a simple linguistic oddity as an uninformed reader might believe, but a discreet way of alluding to the title of an irregular Masonic organization of which Mr. Mallinger is one of the dignitaries; And, had he belonged to another organization of the same kind, he would undoubtedly have said the same thing: "primitive and original state"! A curious attack against the "skin apron," which is based on nothing more than a confusion between two things that are quite different from a symbolic point of view, also seems to be due in reality only to a desire to distinguish himself from regular Freemasonry… As for the substance of the work itself, the purely historical part, that is to say the biography of Pythagoras, made from the known "sources," brings in short nothing very new; perhaps the facts are sometimes presented in a somewhat "tendentious" way, for example when Pythagoras is attributed a very modern concern for "propaganda," or when the organization of his Order is described in a way that suggests that the "social" point of view was like the culmination of everything else. In the second part, the author first discusses the different kinds of mysteries that existed in Greece and elsewhere in Pythagoras's time, and then the Pythagorean mysteries; here again, one senses that the exposition is influenced to some extent by the author's idea of initiation, an idea that is strongly tinged

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[*] [Review of *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America. Flight. II,* from D ˹ Swinburne Clymer.]

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of “humanitarianism” and in which “powers” also play an important role. The way he speaks of a “return to Pythagoras” suggests, despite what he says elsewhere about the “apostolic chain” *(sic)* and the necessity of an “immutable and traditional rite,” that he is still among those who believe that a continuous and uninterrupted transmission is not essential to the validity of initiation; and, when he speaks of the “permanence of the Order” and “its still perceptible pulses today,” one is entitled to wonder exactly how he means this, especially when we have seen so many occultists imagine that an initiatory “chain” can simply be perpetuated “in the astral plane”!

• Jean de Kerdéland – *From Nostradamus to Cagliostro*

(Self Editions, Paris).

This small volume is written throughout in a tone of "Voltairean" mockery that we thought was out of fashion, and which is extremely unpleasant; the author wants to see nothing but "charlatanism" and "deception" everywhere, which is a very convenient and simple way of dismissing anything that might be inconvenient for his "rationalism." The first part, which is the longest, begins with a kind of "fictionalized life" of Nostradamus, followed by what purports to be an examination of his "prophecies"; naturally, it is not difficult to present the whole thing in such a way as to give the ordinary reader the impression that it is nothing but a "monumental" imposture, except "for a few rare moments" when one is willing to admit that Nostradamus showed himself to be "a sincere philanthropist and a convinced reformer." Where Mr. de Kerdéland is not entirely wrong is when he criticizes the recent commentators on Nostradamus; But, unfortunately, his criticisms are all superficial and have little impact, and, moreover, he thought he was "being witty" by interweaving them with numerous "misunderstandings" in very poor taste, the ridiculousness of which ultimately only affects their author… – Of the three characters mentioned in the book, the Count of Saint-Germain, while also being considered a "charlatan," is perhaps the least mistreated; we also find there, almost verbatim, a number of anecdotes that we had already encountered in another work that we discussed some time ago (May 1946 issue).

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But it is above all Cagliostro whom M. de Kerdéland attacks with the most vehemence; without being in any way one of those who consider him a "Master", it is permissible to see in him something other than a vulgar adventurer, but, of course, on the condition of not denying bias, by attributing it very kindly to "the Stupidity of men" (the capital letter is not ours), everything that exceeds the crudest and most narrowly limited conception of "ordinary life"!

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* *[The mysterious Count of Saint-Germain, Rosicrucian and diplomat,* by Pierre Lhermier.]

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• Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought*

(Luzac and Co., London).

This volume is a new collection of studies "on the traditional or normal life of art," constituting a second series following *Why Exhibit Works of Art?,* which we discussed some time ago (June-July 1946 issue). Most of the chapters it comprises had already appeared previously as separate articles in various publications, and we noted a number of them at the time; for these, we will simply refer to the issues of the journal in which they were discussed. – In the first chapter, which gives its title to the volume, Mr. Coomaraswamy again protests against the "aesthetic" conception

And against the pretension of applying it to the interpretation and appreciation of the art of other eras and other peoples: while the latter saw in art above all a certain kind of knowledge, moderns have reduced it to being nothing more than a matter of feeling, and they have invented a theory of art which, instead of being a "rhetoric" in the sense understood by the ancients, is now properly speaking nothing more than a "sophistry." Thus, what were once true "figures of thought," that is to say, symbols adequate to the ideas they were intended to express, are now regarded only as mere "figures of words," solely intended to provoke certain emotions; and what is true in this respect for the spoken arts can be extended to all other forms of art, which have likewise been emptied of all real meaning. Instead of striving to understand works of art—that is, in short, to take them as the “supports for contemplation” they should normally be—modern thinkers seek in them only the opportunity for what they call “disinterested aesthetic pleasure,” which is, moreover, a contradiction in terms. And it is from this perspective that they teach what they claim to be “art history,” but which in reality has no relation to what they wish to apply their own conception to, as if it were that of all humankind. The traditional conception, to which one must necessarily return in order to understand the art of other peoples, is explained here using references drawn primarily from Plato (who, in this respect, is merely the interpreter of the *Philosophia Perennis)* and from Hindu doctrine, and whose comparison clearly shows that this conception was everywhere and always the same, in the West as well as in the East.

Next comes *The Medieval Theory of Beauty* (see our issues of October 1935 and October 1938). – *Ornament* (see the May 1946 issue). – *Ars sine scientia nihil* (see also the May 1946 issue). – *The Meeting of Eyes* is a note on certain portraits, particularly portraits of Christ, whose eyes always seem to look directly at the viewer, whatever position they occupy, and follow them as they move (with particular reference to what Nicholas of Cusa says on this subject in his *De visione Dei).* This is not an accidental effect, but a true necessity of iconography: “if the eyes of an all-seeing God are to be truly and correctly represented, they must appear as seeing all”; and thus this effect is an example of *the integritas sive perfectio* of which Saint Thomas Aquinas

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This is one of the conditions of beauty. – *Shaker Furniture* shows, based on a work recently published under that title, the results obtained, from an artistic point of view, by a community that strove to apply the principles of Christian doctrine to all things, and how simple carpenters, by making furniture as perfectly suited as possible to its use and whose ornamentation excluded all superfluity, spontaneously rediscovered a conception conforming to the "normal view of art," and in particular to that of medieval Christianity, whereas the deliberate imitation of the art of other periods never succeeds in producing anything but true caricatures. – *Literary Symbolism* explains, with numerous supporting examples, the fact that words have meaning simultaneously on several different "levels of reference," which makes their figurative, or more precisely symbolic, use possible and valid, "adequate symbolism being able to be defined as the representation of a reality on one level of reference by a corresponding reality on another." However, to understand the traditional language of symbols, one must be careful to avoid any "subjective" interpretation; this is something that cannot be improvised and whose study, for many reasons, is far from easy: and one must not forget that this language is in reality "the universal, and universally intelligible, language in which the highest truths have always been expressed." – In *Intention,* the author defends the method of art criticism that takes into account the relationship between intention and result, or, in other words, that examines whether the artist has indeed accomplished what he set out to do. As for the critique of intention itself, it has nothing to do with the value of the artwork as such, and it can only proceed from a point of view, moral or otherwise, that differs entirely from that of artistic appreciation.

Imitation, Expression, and Participation (see May 1946 issue). – *The Intellectual Operation in Indian Art* (see December 1935 issue). – *The Nature of Buddhist Art* (see March 1938 issue). – *Samvêga, "Aesthetic Shock,"* is the explanation of a *Pali* term frequently used to designate "the shock or astonishment that can be felt when the perception of a work of art becomes a serious experience," providing the starting point for a reflection that can bring about a profound change in the individual; the effects of such a shock can, moreover, only be fully explained by appealing to the Platonic and Indian doctrine of "reminiscence." – *An Early Passage on Indian Painting* is a text by *the Atthasâlinî* answering the question: "How does thought produce its various effects?" and in which many technical terms are introduced by a kind of pun on *chitta,* "thought," and *chitta* (in Sanskrit: *chitra),* "painting." – *Some References to Pictorial Relief* is a comparison of several Greek and Indian texts in which the representation of relief in painting is discussed in almost identical terms.

Primitive Mentality is the English text of the study that appeared here in the special issue on Folklore (August-September-October 1939). – In *Notes on "Savage" Art,* it is shown, through quotations from two works concerning the art of New Guinea and that of the Marquesas Islands, to what extent, among these so-called "savage" peoples, all the work of the artisans had a strictly traditional and ritual character, before European influence came and destroyed everything under the pretext of "civilization." – *Symptom, Diagnosis, and Regime* (see May 1946 issue). – Finally, *On the Life of Symbols ,* which concludes the volume, is the translation of the conclusion of

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Walter Andrae's work, *Die ionische Säule, Bauform oder Symbol?,* where it is still insisted upon the symbolic value which essentially originally had everything which today is regarded only as a simple "ornament", because the profound meaning which properly made it "the image of a spiritual truth" has been forgotten or misunderstood.

December 1946

- **Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society. – Indian Culture and English Influence. – East and West***

(Orientalia, New York).

Mr. Coomaraswamy has brought together in this booklet three separate studies, in the first of which he set out to show, by the example of India, how, "in a traditional social order, institutions represent an application of metaphysical doctrines to contingent circumstances", such that everything there has a reason for being, not simply biological or psychological, but truly metaphysical. From this point of view, he successively examines the fourfold purpose of human life *(purushârtha),* the institution of the four *ashramas,* the notion of *dharma* with all that it implies, and finally, in connection with *swadharma,* the institution of castes, with the character of "vocation" which essentially characterizes the exercise of any profession whatsoever, as well as the sacred and ritual character which necessarily has all activity where the castes themselves are considered as "born of Sacrifice", so that the profane point of view is nowhere to be found, and the whole of life appears as the fulfillment of a ritual in which there is nothing that is devoid of meaning. – In the second study, the author, after first citing various criticisms leveled at modern civilization by Westerners themselves as well as by Easterners, highlights the destructive effects that European influence inevitably has in a country which, like India, still possesses a traditional civilization; and these effects are not exerted solely in the intellectual sphere, but equally in the social order itself, where the influence in question tends above all to overturn the organization in which, as mentioned earlier, every profession is properly a “vocation,” an organization which, as A.M. Hocart very rightly pointed out, is indeed incompatible with the industrial system of the modern West. It is against the very conception of life implied by this system that it is necessary to react first and foremost if one wishes to avoid an irreparable catastrophe; And it is certainly not desirable to continue, under the pretext of "progress," to advance in the same direction when one finds oneself on the edge of a precipice. – Finally, in the last study, Mr. Coomaraswamy explains that the antithesis of East and West, such

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The current state of affairs should not be understood in a purely geographical sense, but rather as a clash between the traditional and modern minds. This is fundamentally a matter of time far more than of place, since as long as the West possessed a normal civilization comparable to all others, such an opposition could not exist in any way. Goodwill and "philanthropy" are certainly insufficient to eliminate this opposition, especially in a state of affairs where what is considered "good" or "bad" lacks both principle and is ultimately based solely on a purely quantitative conception of life. What is needed above all is understanding, for it is only through this understanding that everything can be resolved, including political and economic questions, which are, in reality, merely the most external and least important. Here, the author returns to the concept of "vocation," that is, the determination of occupations not by arbitrary choice or by considerations of profit or ambition, but by each individual's own nature, thereby allowing every person to work toward their own perfection as well as that of the products of their craft. The problem of restoring this concept, which should be resolved first and foremost to escape the current disorder, can only be solved by understanding the principles upon which the traditional caste system is based. It goes without saying, moreover, that any effort at reconciliation can only come from the West, since it is the West that has abandoned the once-common norms, while the East still largely adheres to them. And it is only with this traditional East that the West could cooperate, while with the modernized East, it could only ever be in rivalry. When the West has rediscovered its "Self," which is also the "Self" of all other men, the problem of understanding the East will have been solved at the same time, and all that will remain is the task of putting into practice what has been understood; the other term of the alternative is a reduction of the whole world to the present state of Europe; it is ultimately a question of choosing between a movement deliberately directed towards a foreseen destiny, and a passive submission to an inexorable fate.

- **Walter Shewring – *Art in Christian Philosophy***

(The Sower Press, New Jersey).

This booklet provides an excellent summary of the Christian doctrine of art, primarily as expounded by Saint Thomas Aquinas. Starting from Aquinas's definition, the author emphasizes that art is first and foremost an intellectual endeavor, although it also involves the will, without which the work of art would never be created. The artist's will acts as an efficient cause, but the formal cause is the idea conceived in their intellect. Furthermore, art, which is properly that by which the artist works—a permanent intellectual *habitus* or intelligibly conceived inner word—concerns the creation of all things, not merely of one particular class of things, as modern thinkers generally believe. Another essential point is that humankind, as artists, imitates God insofar as He is the Artist par excellence, and that the divine Word, "by whom all things were made," is the true archetype of the word or idea.

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residing in the mind of the human artist. As for the aim of art, it is the production of useful things, but on the condition of understanding this usefulness in its broadest sense, as applying to everything that can serve in any way the ends of man, spiritually as well as materially. After a digression on beauty, which must be considered a "transcendental," and not a special prerogative of works of art, the author moves on to what he very rightly calls "modern aberrations," opposed to this normal conception of art, and he concludes by considering the possibility of a "return to the norm" from the more specific point of view of Catholicism. We would only have reservations on one point: while naturally recognizing the conformity of the Christian conception with any traditional view of art, Mr. Shewring seems to have a tendency to claim as properly Christian everything that, in reality, is traditional in the universal sense of the word; One might even wonder if he doesn't go so far as to attribute to "natural reason" everything that is not Christianity, whereas, on the contrary, every tradition, whatever it may be, possesses the same supernatural and superhuman character, without which it would in no way deserve the name and would not rise above the level of mere secular "philosophy." As long as Mr. Shewring confines himself to the domain of his own traditional form, what he says is perfectly fine, but he is undoubtedly still quite far from grasping the essential unity of all traditions, and that is a pity, for this would certainly allow him to give the ideas he presents a completely different scope and considerably extend their reach by recognizing their truly universal value.

January-February 1947

• **Marco Pallis – *Peaks and Lamas***

(Cassell and Co., London).

This work, to which Mr. Coomaraswamy already devoted a note here upon its initial publication (June 1940 issue), has since gone through several successive editions, in which the author has made certain minor improvements. Our intention, in so doing, is to...
Returning to this topic, the aim is not to discuss what is properly a "travelogue," whatever its interest may be, but simply to highlight a few points directly related to Tibetan doctrine. We must note first of all that Mr. Pallis does not accept the term "Lamaism," which, in English, apparently carries a certain pejorative connotation; we must say that this does not seem to be the case in French, so that, for our part, we had seen no problem in using it on occasion; it is true that it is merely a conventional term, but there are others that are also in this category (that of "Confucianism," for example), and which are used solely for reasons of convenience. One can undoubtedly be content to speak simply of Tibetan Buddhism, and perhaps that is the best approach.

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everything; it must be clearly understood, in any case, that this Buddhism has particularities that clearly distinguish it from other forms, not only of Buddhism in general, but even of *Mahayana ,* of which it is a branch. – A chapter of particular importance from a doctrinal point of view is the one entitled " *The Round of Existence,"* which contains an excellent exposition of the symbolism of the "Wheel of Life," a schematic representation of the multiple states of conditioned existence. On this occasion, the author explains various fundamental points of Buddhist doctrine, insofar as it essentially aims to lead beings out of the indefinite cycle of these states and into *Nirvana,* about which he very rightly corrects the false interpretations prevalent in the West: "It is the extinction of Ignorance and the series of its consequences; a double negation is the only means we have of faintly suggesting its positive reality. He who attains this state knows it; He who has not attained it can only speculate in terms of his own relativity, which do not apply: between this state and the Circle of Existence, there is a complete discontinuity." We should also note the considerations concerning Method and Wisdom, viewed as complementary and inseparable from one another, and symbolized respectively by the *dorje* and the *dilbu.* – Another chapter contains a few pages on the symbolism of the *Tantras,* which, besides the clarifications they provide in the strictly doctrinal order, and particularly concerning the concept of *Shakti,* constitute as clear a refutation as possible of the inept assertions found everywhere on this subject, which is undoubtedly one of those where Western misunderstanding has reached its highest degree. Elsewhere, we will find explanations of the "Three Refuges," the formula *Om mani padme hum ,* and *mantras* in general as aids to meditation; and other points, too numerous to list, are discussed incidentally throughout the book. – The last part is devoted almost entirely to Tibetan art; it begins by discussing its present state, and it is worth noting that this is one of the rare examples still found of a truly living traditional art today. The author has introduced some general views on "folk art," inspired by the observations of Mr. Coomaraswamy; But he observes that, in Tibet, it is hardly possible to conceive of a "folk art" distinct from any other kind of art, "because all the elements that have contributed to shaping Tibetan civilization, from whatever source they may have originated, have been combined into a highly elaborate synthesis, adapted to the needs of people of every rank and ability." Mr. Pallis then demonstrates the close connection between art and doctrine; in this chapter, which we cannot summarize, we will only note the considerations on the essentially intellectual character of traditional art, on ritual regarded as "a synthesis of all the arts placed at the service of doctrine and working together toward a single end," which is to prepare the mind for metaphysical realization, and on the absence of any "idolatry" in the use thus made of symbolic representations. Finally, he draws attention to the danger that may arise, for art and for the whole of traditional civilization which forms an indivisible whole, from the penetration of Western influence, from which the interior of Tibet is still free until now, but which is already beginning to be felt on its borders. We will also mention, in this

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These are very accurate reflections on the importance of costume for maintaining the traditional spirit; those who want to destroy tradition among a people certainly know very well what they are doing when they begin by imposing the wearing of European costume on them!

- **Robert Bleichsteiner – *The Yellow Church***

Translation by Jacques Marty (Payot, Paris).

The title of this book calls for a few remarks: firstly, we believe it would be better to avoid using the term "Church" in such a case, because of the specifically Christian meaning that has become attached to it and from which it is almost impossible to separate it; secondly, the designation "Yellow Church" can in any case only be applied to one branch of Lamaism (the author, unlike Mr. Pallis, readily uses this latter term), that which followed the reform of Tsongkhapa, to distinguish it from what could then be called the "Red Church," which remained as it was before the time of this reform. However, the work actually deals with both, that is to say, in short, with Tibetan Buddhism in general, and also with Mongolian Buddhism, which is directly derived from it. It is perhaps even the only comprehensive work, or at least the only easily accessible one, on this subject, and this is precisely what makes it so interesting; we are referring to its "documentary" value, because, as for the "spirit" in which it is written, there are certainly many reservations to be made. First, it contains a fairly complete historical account; unfortunately, this account itself is affected by a kind of skepticism towards anything that cannot be explained according to modern Western ideas, and one senses a rather strong tendency to want to "rationalize" everything. One point that remains rather obscure concerns the religion of *Bon,* which predates the introduction of Buddhism, and about which, in fact, very little is known; as for what is said about an even older so-called "popular belief," it is hardly possible to understand what it refers to. Perhaps we are talking about a form of "shamanism," which, moreover, should probably predate its current degeneration, and which in any case could only be "popular" by virtue of its partial survivals, constituting, if you will, a kind of "folklore," after it had been replaced by other traditional forms. In this regard, let us point out, although it is found in another part of the book, a rather interesting remark, or at least one that could be interesting if one knew how to draw the consequences from it; the points of contact between Lamaism and Shamanism "are not explained by the influences that Buddhism has undergone in Mongolia and Tibet from the prevailing theories there; they are exclusively traits already attested in Indian Tantrism, and which, from that country, have combined with the ideas of Lamaism." But instead of seeing in this evidence of a common traditional source, which may well go back quite far, the author merely declares that "the explanation of these remarkable encounters must be left to further research"... – After the historical section, the monasteries and temples, the different categories of "gods" of Lamaism, and the hierarchy of monks (among others) are studied in succession.

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Those who follow the "direct path" are unfairly labeled "mystics"), the "magical arts" (a term used to indiscriminately lump together many things that are certainly not all magical in the true sense of the word), rites and festivals (where symbolic dances play a significant role, and here the author rightly points out the error too frequently made by those who have described them, mistaking the "terrifying" deities depicted for diabolical entities), then cosmology (whose symbolic aspect is hardly understood), the sciences (particularly astrology and medicine), and finally the arts and literature. All of this, let us reiterate, is interesting as documentation, but only if one disregards the author's opinions, who misses no opportunity to rail against what he calls "tantric horrors" and to dismiss as "absurd and lamentable superstitions" anything that escapes his comprehension! – We don't know exactly to what extent certain flaws in expression should be attributed to the translation; this is probably the case when it comes to sentences whose meaning is quite unclear, and unfortunately there are quite a few of these; but it seems difficult not to attribute to the author himself the use of some rather extraordinary terms, such as, for example, "fulminary stone" to render *dorje,* or "reincarnations" to designate the *tulkus,* which most Europeans very improperly call "living Buddhas," and which, in reality, are nothing other than the human vessels of certain spiritual influences. On the other hand, it is unfortunate that the translator felt compelled to adopt a bizarre transcription for the Tibetan words, which seems to be a slightly modified version of the German transcription, and which sometimes makes them rather difficult to recognize for those who are used to seeing them in another form; The absence of any indication of long vowels in Sanskrit terms is also rather annoying, and these are imperfections that it would have been very easy to avoid, since this at least obviously requires no effort of understanding.

March 1947

• Émile Dermenghen – *Kabyle Tales*

(Charlot, Algiers).

What makes this collection of "folk tales" from North Africa particularly interesting, in our view, is the introduction and the accompanying notes, which present general views on the nature of "universal folklore".
The author rightly points out that "the true interest of folk literatures lies elsewhere than in lineages, influences, and external dependencies," that it resides above all in what they bear witness "to the unity of traditions." He highlights the inadequacy of the "rationalist and evolutionist" viewpoint to which most folklorists and ethnologists adhere.

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with their theories on "seasonal rites" and other things of the same kind; and he recalls, with regard to the properly symbolic meaning of the tales and the truly "transcendent" character of their content, some of the considerations that we ourselves and some of our collaborators have set forth here.

However, it is regrettable that he nevertheless felt compelled to give more or less considerable weight to conceptions that are hardly compatible with those: between the alleged "Seasonal rites" and initiation rites, between the so-called "tribal initiation" of ethnologists and true initiation, a choice must necessarily be made; even if it is true and normal that esotericism has its reflection and its correspondence in the exoteric side of traditions, one must in any case beware of putting the principle and its secondary applications on the same level, and, with regard to the latter, it would also be necessary, in the present case, to consider them entirely apart from the anti-traditional ideas of our contemporaries on "primitive societies"; and what to say on the other hand of the psychoanalytic interpretation, which, in reality, simply ends up denying the "superconscious" by confusing it with the "subconscious"?

Let us add further that initiation, understood in its true sense, has nothing and could never have anything "mystical" about it; it is particularly unfortunate to see this ambiguity persist despite all the explanations we have been able to give on this subject… The notes and commentaries primarily demonstrate the numerous similarities that exist between Kabyle tales and those of other, very diverse countries, and it hardly needs to be said that these comparisons are of particular interest as "illustrations" of the universality of folklore. A final note deals with the initial and final formulas of the tales, clearly corresponding to those that generally mark the beginning and end of the performance of a rite, and which are related, as we have explained elsewhere, to the Hermetic "coagulation" and "solution." As for the tales themselves, they seem rendered as faithfully as a translation allows, and, moreover, they are very pleasant to read.

• Émile Dermenghem – *The Myth of Psyche in Northern Folklore African*

(Algerian Historical Society, Algiers).

In this other folklore study, the focus is on the numerous tales in North Africa, as in many other countries, where the main features of the well-known myth of Psyche are found gathered together or scattered; "there is hardly one of these features that does not suggest an initiatory and ritualistic meaning; nor is there one that we cannot find in universal folklore." There are also variants, the most remarkable of which is "the inverted form in which the married mystical being is female"; tales of this type "seem to emphasize the active side, the conquest side, as if they represented the aspect of human effort rather than

the passive and theocentric aspect"; these two aspects are obviously complementary. Now, that Apuleius, who certainly did not invent the myth, may have drawn inspiration, for certain details of the version he gives in his * *Golden Ass*,* from a "popular African oral tradition," is not impossible; but it must not be forgotten that depictions relating to this myth already exist.

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on earlier Greek monuments from several centuries ago; this question of "sources" is all the less important in the end since the very spread of the myth indicates that one would have to go back much further to find its origin, if indeed one can properly speak of an origin in such a case; moreover, folklore as such can never be the starting point of anything, for it is on the contrary made up only of "survivals", which is even its raison d'être. On the other hand, the fact that certain features correspond to customs, prohibitions, or other things that actually existed in relation to marriage in a particular country proves absolutely nothing against the existence of a higher meaning, from which we would even say, for our part, that these customs themselves may have been derived, again for the reason that exotericism has its principle in esotericism, so that this higher and initiatory meaning, far from being "added" after the fact, is on the contrary the one that is truly primordial in reality. The examination of the relationship between the myth of Psyche and the tales related to it with the ancient mysteries, with which Mr. Dermenghem's study concludes, is particularly worthy of interest, as is the indication of certain parallels with *tasawwuf ;* We will only add, in this regard, that similarities such as those which can be noted between the terminology of the latter and the Platonic vocabulary should in no way be taken as marks of any "borrowing", for *tasawwuf* is properly and essentially Islamic, and such comparisons do nothing other than affirm as clearly as possible the "unanimity" of the universal tradition in all its forms.

• Henry Corbin – *Suhrawardi of Aleppo, founder of the illuminative doctrine (ishrâq)*

(G.-P. Maisonneuve, Paris).

Suhrawardi of Aleppo, to whom this booklet is dedicated, is often called *Esh-Sheikh el-maqtûl* to distinguish him from his namesakes, although, in truth, it is not known for certain whether he was actually killed or whether he starved himself to death in prison. The historical section is meticulously written and provides a good overview of his life and works; however, there are many reservations to be made about certain interpretations, as well as about certain assertions concerning highly hypothetical supposed "sources": in particular, we find here the peculiar idea, to which we alluded in a recent article, that all angelology necessarily originates from Zoroastrianism. Furthermore, the author has failed to properly distinguish between this *Ishraqiyah doctrine,* which is not connected to any regular *silsilah ,* and true *tasawwuf .* It is quite risky to say, based on a few superficial similarities, that "Suhrawardi is in the lineage of al-Hallaj"; and one should certainly not take literally the words of one of his admirers who calls him "the master of the moment," for such expressions are often used in a purely hyperbolic way. Undoubtedly, he must have been influenced to some extent by *tasawwuf,* but, fundamentally, he seems to have drawn inspiration from Neoplatonic ideas which he clothed in an Islamic form, and this is why his doctrine is generally regarded as not belonging to

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truly nothing but philosophy; but have orientalists ever been able to understand the profound difference that separates *tasawwuf* from all philosophy?
Finally, although this is of secondary importance overall, we wonder why Mr. Corbin sometimes felt the need to imitate, to such an extent that one could be mistaken for him, the complicated and rather obscure style of Mr. Massignon.

June 1947

- **Paul Chacornac – *The Count of Saint-Germain***

(Chacornac Frères, Paris).

This new book by our Director represents the result of long and patient research pursued over many years; one is astonished to see the prodigious quantity of books and documents of all kinds that had to be consulted to carefully verify each piece of information, and one cannot sufficiently praise the scrupulous integrity of such work. While not all points are entirely clarified, which was undoubtedly impossible, at least a good number are, and in a way that seems quite definitive. To achieve this, it was first necessary to dispel the confusions that have arisen with various other figures, notably with Lieutenant-General Claude-Louis de Saint-Germain; this is one of the most frequent, but, despite the similarity of name and title by which it is explained, it is no less astonishing, for this concerns a man who played a perfectly well-known historical role and in which there is nothing obscure or mysterious. There is also Prince Rakoczi, from whom some in our time have made great use, but whose alleged history is nothing but a tissue of improbabilities; the most likely is that this name simply served, in certain circumstances, to conceal the true origin of the Count of Saint-Germain.

There are still a number of other real or supposed characters, some of whom owe their semblance of existence only to the imaginative fantasies given rise to the names taken by the Count of Saint-Germain himself at various times and in different countries. The ground thus cleared, it becomes much easier to follow the hero from his first known appearance in London in 1745 until his "official" death at the Prince of Hesse's in 1784; And when the tall tales of Casanova and other equally untrustworthy "memoirists," the hoaxes of the illusionist Gauve, and several other stories falsely attributed to the Count of Saint-Germain—such as the role some ascribed to him in the Russian Revolution of 1762, which, incidentally, bears little resemblance to the "adventurer" and "charlatan" so many have portrayed him as—have been properly debunked, one sees in him, in reality, a man endowed with remarkable talents in various fields, possessing uncommon knowledge of many subjects, from whatever source he may have acquired it, and who, while he had friends and admirers everywhere he went, also had, as often happens in such cases, enemies.

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determined to thwart his endeavors, whether it be his diplomatic mission in Holland or the industry he later sought to establish in Flanders under the name of M. de Surmont… But, alongside this truly “historical” life, or following it, there is also the “legend,” which has continued to grow to this day, especially concerning the “survival” of the Count of Saint-Germain and the manifestations attributed to him after the date of what, for this very reason, we referred to earlier as his “official” death. There are certainly many extravagances in this, not the least of which are those that the Theosophists, adopting the identification with Prince Rakoczi, have spread about their “Master R.” But there are also other things that seem more difficult to dismiss outright, and which, even if distorted or misinterpreted, one might wonder if they don't at least contain a certain element of truth. Thus, an enigma remains, and indeed, there is yet another, this one of a purely historical nature, for the mystery of the birth of the Count of Saint-Germain has not yet been solved. On this last point, the author considers a solution that he presents only as a hypothesis, but which is in any case rendered highly plausible by a whole series of rather striking parallels.

According to this hypothesis, the Count of Saint-Germain was the illegitimate son of Marie-Anne of Neuburg, widow of King Charles II of Spain, and the Count of Melgar, Admiral of Castile, whose immense fortune had earned him the nickname "the Banker of Madrid," which may have led to the confusion that resulted in some claiming he was the son of a Jewish banker. If this supposition is correct, many things are easily explained, notably the considerable resources evidently at the Count of Saint-Germain's disposal, the precious stones and Old Master paintings he owned, and also, even more importantly, the trust consistently shown in him by sovereigns and important figures, from Louis XV to
The Prince of Hesse must have been aware of this lineage to which he was related, but which, constituting something of a "state secret," had to be carefully concealed from everyone except themselves. As for the other enigma, that of the "legend," it is explained as far as possible and interpreted in light of traditional doctrines in the final chapter; as this chapter first appeared in this very publication (December 1945 issue), we will simply reiterate its great interest without dwelling on it further. We believe that, unless one wishes to cling to the fantasies that have been all too prevalent in certain circles until now, it will no longer be possible to speak of the Count of Saint-Germain without referring to this work, for which we extend our warmest congratulations to its author.

- **Emile Dermenghem – *Joseph de Maistre, mystic***

('La Colombe', Paris).

A new revised edition of this book has just been published, to which have been added quite a few notes clarifying certain points and indicating the works which, devoted to related questions, have appeared since its first publication.
For those of our readers who are not yet familiar with this work, we will say that it presents, as completely as possible, the Masonic career of

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Joseph de Maistre, his relationships with the initiatory organizations linked to Freemasonry of his time and with various figures belonging to these organizations, and the considerable influence their doctrines exerted on his thinking. All of this is very interesting, especially since Joseph de Maistre's religious and social ideas have most often been very poorly understood, even sometimes entirely distorted and interpreted in a way that in no way corresponded to his true intentions; only knowledge of the influences in question could allow for the necessary clarification. The main criticism we would have to make concerns the very title of the book, because, in truth, we see nothing "mystical" in all of this, and even when Joseph de Maistre kept himself apart from any initiatory activity, it does not appear that he ever turned to mysticism for that reason, as others sometimes did. It does not even seem that there was a real change of direction on his part, but a simple attitude of reserve which he felt, rightly or wrongly, was imposed on him by his diplomatic functions; but can we hope that, in the minds of some, the confusion of the two initiatory and mystical domains can ever be entirely dispelled?

- **Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin – *Natural Tableau of the Relationships that Exist between God, Man and the Universe***

Introduction by Philippe Lavastine. (Editions du Griffon d'Or, Rochefort-sur-Mer).

This re-edition is certainly more carefully produced than the 1900 "Martinist" edition, but it still contains many errors that would, it seems, have been quite easy to correct. The author of the introduction summarizes the main features of Saint-Martin's doctrine in a few pages; but doesn't he try a little too hard to downplay the difference between the two periods of his life, that is, between his early initiatory activity and his later mysticism?

- **P.-J. Gonnet – *Arûpa***

(Paul Derain, Lyon).

It is a rather peculiar book, giving a somewhat confused and disordered impression, but one that hardly justifies its title, as it deals primarily with matters belonging to a completely "formal" order. In particular, there are many considerations on chemistry, which are clearly related to the author's professional interests; there is even a long dissertation on "breast milk," which might make a good article in a specialized medical or hygiene journal, but which is truly out of place in a work that otherwise purports to touch upon esotericism and traditional ideas. It does touch upon these to some extent, through views on numbers that are not without interest, but which are unfortunately expressed in a very unclear manner; moreover, the information used is far from complete.

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also safe. There are also pages with a most bizarre typographical layout, some containing only a few words which, at least for us, are completely incomprehensible. As for the author's account in his preamble of a "revelation" he supposedly had in a sort of "altered state," according to which the Universe entered a period of "resorption" on December 1 , 1944, we want to believe that this is merely a literary fiction, because if it were otherwise, it would be rather disturbing…

- **R.-M. Gattefosse – *The Wise Scriptures, Essay on the philosophy and the origins of writing***

(Paul Derain, Lyon).

The idea that is at the starting point of this book is excellent, since it is about establishing the symbolic value of the characters of writing, as well as their "prehistoric" origin, in accordance with the ancient traditions of all peoples.
Unfortunately, the way the author has treated these questions and the results he believes he has achieved in his research fall far short of his intentions; and, first of all, there are already reservations to be made about the concordance he envisions between traditional data on cyclical periods and the hypothetical chronology of modern geologists. Secondly, probably due to certain particular circumstances in which he found himself, he seems to have been somewhat fascinated by the "Tifinar," that is, the ancient Berber script, as well as by the "Tamashek" language still spoken by the Tuareg, to the point of wanting to derive a scheme from them that he attempts to apply to everything. This scheme, which he calls the "Tifinar crown," may be suitable for the specific case of the alphabet in question; but, since the letters of this alphabet number ten, he seeks to discover everywhere sets of ten principles that he can make correspond to these letters by arranging them in the same way. in the Kabbalah with the ten *Sephiroth,* in the Bardic Triads, in Scandinavian mythology with the "cycle of the Aesir," in Hermeticism, in Aristotle's philosophy with his ten categories, and even in the theories of modern physics! The least that can be said of these arrangements is that they are entirely artificial and often quite "forced"; and there are also, concerning the doctrines of India and China, some considerations in which it is impossible to perceive the slightest connection with what they actually are… The planetary and zodiacal correspondences of the Hebrew letters, which are otherwise well known, are almost the only thing here that conforms to a genuinely traditional datum, but precisely because of this, they no longer reproduce the "crown of Tifinagh"; as for those of the Scandinavian runes, if they are truly accurate, how is it that there remain three planets to which no character corresponds? We do not wish to dwell further on all this; But what about the so-called "Tamashek lexicon"?

placed at the end of the work, and where words belonging to the most diverse languages are gathered, which certainly have nothing to do with "Tamashek", and whose interpretation testifies more in favor of the author's imagination than his linguistic knowledge?

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• **Paul Le Cour – *Hellenism and Christianity***

(Bière Publishing, Bordeaux).

Some had already tried to link Christianity to Zoroastrianism and even Buddhism, in order to deny the traditional, yet obvious, connection that links it to Judaism; now here is a new theory which, with the same intentions, claims to link it directly to Hellenism. It is in Hellenism that Christianity supposedly had its true "source," and Judaism only intervened later to alter its original character by introducing certain ideas, among which that of "geocentrism" seems, for reasons we cannot quite understand, to take on particular importance here. The reasons invoked in support of this thesis are quite numerous, but they are no more convincing for it, except perhaps in the eyes of those who prefer quantity to quality. We will certainly not undertake to examine them one by one, but we must at least note that the author treats as "interpolations" everything in the Gospels that contradicts them, which is always a very convenient way to get rid of troublesome texts, and also that his customary linguistic whims still play a certain role in this. From this latter point of view, we will point out more specifically certain considerations on the name Helen, which supposedly means "the sacred new," a comparison between Johannism and the Ionian school, a purported Greek etymology of the name Jerusalem, intended to support the assertion that Judaism itself borrowed from Hellenism, and finally the at least curious idea of making Greek the "sacred language" par excellence! Let us add, in conclusion, that we find in this book the legend that dates the so-called "Boyer d'Agen" medal back to the early days of Christianity, which clearly dates only from the Renaissance; It is high time to put an end to this story once and for all, especially since the ends for which it was once spread among the public do not seem to have been entirely disinterested.

• **Paul Le Cour – *God and the Gods***

(Bière Publishing, Bordeaux).

This book, intended as a sequel to the previous one, bears, as the author himself acknowledges, a title borrowed from Gougenot des Mousseaux, but its content has nothing in common with the work the latter devoted to the cult of stones. In many of its chapters, we find things we have already seen in articles *in Atlantis* and which we discussed at the time, thus sparing us the need to go into detail; there are not even many new fantasies, but rather repetitions of those we already know, so much so that it would seem the author's fertile imagination is beginning to run somewhat dry, which would be a real shame… He envisions a “hierarchy of the Gods,” at the head of which is the “Supreme God”; below him are what he calls the “Solar Gods”; whose principal one for him is the "Demiurge," and it is one aspect of this, the "Mediator," who is said to have been incarnated in Christ; there are also "plurisolar Gods," "planetary Gods," "protective Geniuses," and

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Perhaps even other categories. Ultimately, this is simply a repetition of the error of taking, literally and not symbolically, divine aspects or attributes for distinct and even more or less independent beings—the very error that gave rise to all the "polytheistic" deviations wherever they have occurred. And, frankly, this is not particularly surprising coming from such an admirer of Hellenism. What is more astonishing is that he could believe this conception to be consistent with Christianity. It is true that he has some rather peculiar ideas about it, and also that, in his mind, it is probably primarily a question of what "the future Christian religious form of the Age of Aquarius" should be, about which one can certainly indulge in all sorts of fantasies!

July-August 1947

- **Jean Malfatti of Montereggio – *Studies on Mathematics, or Anarchy and Hierarchy of Science***

Translation by Christien Ostrowski. Introduction by Gilles Deleuze (Éditions du Griffon d'Or, Paris).

This re-edition, which reproduces with a few slight modifications the French translation published in 1849, was certainly not inopportune, for this book is one of those that is often talked about, but very few have actually read. As for its intrinsic value, we must say that it seems to us to present primarily a curiosity, for the truth is that it is terribly dated, and this not only with regard to the biological and medical considerations, which certainly bear the mark of their time, but which contain ingenious insights that perhaps deserve to be revisited in another form; it is also, and even more so, dated in what relates to the
Hindu tradition. This was little known in Europe at that time, where only very fragmentary and often inaccurate notions of it were available; moreover, it was a time when some had invented a "symbolism" which did little to compensate for their ignorance of true symbolism, and whose influence is very visible here.
Gathering together rather disparate principles, the choice of which is no less arbitrary than the order in which he arranges them, the author sought to find a correspondence with numbers, and, starting from this idea, he endeavored to discover in the representations at his disposal things that are certainly not there; it hardly needs adding that, conversely, any metaphysical significance completely eludes him. Instead of giving pride of place to such fancies, he would have done much better to simply present his speculations on numbers as being of Pythagorean inspiration, which would have been more justified; moreover, they remain, on the whole, rather vague and obscure, and it is difficult to see clearly how he derives certain applications from them.
What is perhaps most noteworthy, from a point of view that one might say

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"Historical" is the considerable role that this work and others of the same kind played in the formation of late 19th- century occultism; based on such unreliable information and substituting it for the authentic traditional data it entirely lacked, is it surprising that it was never anything more than a collection of fantasies without the slightest solidity? But it is good that this can be realized by referring to the sources, and, ultimately, this is perhaps what makes a re-edition like this one so valuable.

- **J.-M. Ragon –** ***On Occult Freemasonry and Initiation hermetic***

Introduction by A. Volguine. (Editions des Cahiers Astrologiques, Nice).

This is yet another book that is also "dated," although in a somewhat different way from the previous one, and especially in its first part, where the various things that are usually grouped under the rather vague term "occult sciences" are reviewed. Apart from certain considerations on numbers and sacred words, there is, in truth, nothing specifically Masonic here, except the idea that Freemasons should include these sciences in their studies; the author had even conceived the project of establishing three degrees or "schools of instruction" that would have been more particularly devoted to them and that would have, in a way, "doubled" the three symbolic degrees; what is rather singular is that he could have thought that they would have been, in relation to the latter, what the "greater mysteries" were in relation to the "lesser mysteries"; This certainly demonstrates a very limited initiatory conception… On the other hand, it is important to note the preponderant place given here to magnetism, for we find in it further confirmation of the truly harmful influence that it exerted on Masonic circles, and this, as we have already pointed out on other occasions, from the end of the 18th century, that is to say from the very time of Mesmer, whose “Rite of Universal Harmony” is mentioned here, and whose role seems to have been above all, although perhaps unconsciously, to divert the Masons from more serious and more truly initiatory concerns; moreover, we see all too clearly in Ragon what a crudely materialized conception of the “invisible world” these “fluidic” theories led to. The second part, on Hermetic initiation, is of more direct interest from a strictly Masonic point of view, especially for the documentation it contains, and despite the rather bizarre and fanciful form that certain myths take, particularly those of Egypt, whose "philosophical interpretation" moreover closely resembles that of Pernéty and is clearly inspired by it to a large extent. As for Ragon's own conception of Hermeticism, it would be difficult to say exactly how far it might have gone, but, although he seems to recognize that alchemical symbols had a double meaning, it is to be feared that it did not go very far; the way in which he sometimes speaks in this regard of "useful sciences," as well as the way in which he seeks, on the other hand, to justify his interest in magnetism, would even seem to indicate that, for him, initiation should hardly aim at anything other than forming "benefactors of humanity." – In his introduction, Mr. Volguine

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He insists above all on astrology and its relationship with Masonic symbolism, which is easily understood, since it is essentially his "specialty"; but he criticizes Ragon for denying astrology and considering it only as a "superstition." Now, we must say that, upon referring to the chapter indicated on this subject, what we found there is quite significantly different: it states that astrology "is certainly the first and, consequently, the most ancient of the sciences and superstitions," and it is quite clear from the context that these last two words refer respectively to true astrology and to the more or less charlatanic abuses to which it has given rise. As for the assertion that the first one disappeared long ago, we would certainly not contradict it for our part, and we would only add that the attempts currently being made to reconstitute it, although certainly not falling into the category of abuses just mentioned, are nevertheless still only distortions of another. From another point of view, it is truly astonishing that one could believe that the kind of ancient hermetic degrees whose rituals Ragon cites were ever part of the "scale of 33 degrees", which belongs exclusively to the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite and has nothing to do with other "systems" of high degrees past or present; however, we want to think that this confusion is only apparent and results only from unclear and insufficiently explicit rise to the writing. There is yet another point we must mention, and one which, unfortunately, cannot give same doubt: it concerns a certain "Humanist Astrological Masonic Order," in seven degrees, which was founded in Belgium in 1927 by members of Mixed Freemasonry, and which is described as "perfectly regular." How could an essentially irregular organization possibly have given rise to a regular Rite? This is a problem we certainly do not intend to solve; in our opinion, it simply proves that some people have very unclear ideas on matters of Masonic regularity!

September 1947

- **G. Persigout – *The Chamber of Reflection. – Historical and philosophical considerations on the esoteric content and scope of the Earth Trial***

(R. Méré, Paris).

This large volume consists of a collection, with some additions, of articles on this subject that previously appeared in *Symbolism,* and which we have already discussed as they were published. The author, moreover, attempted in his foreword to address certain objections we raised at the time; but we must tell him frankly that his approach in no way alters our opinion on this matter. He primarily seeks to justify his frequent references to the most secular philosophical and scientific concepts.

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“Addressing the secular world,” he says, “we are forced to start from secular sciences in order to bring it down to the level of traditional sciences.” Now, on the one hand, this is entirely impossible, because the very perspective of secular sciences is incompatible with that of traditional sciences, and consequently, the former, far from leading to the latter, can only hinder their understanding; on the other hand, we truly fail to see how or why, when dealing with questions of an initiatory nature, one could want to “address the secular world,” and this is an idea that, for our part, we have certainly never entertained! Furthermore, we wonder who is referring to this other sentence: “Ultimately, it is not by trying to orientalize them at all costs that we will induce modern Western minds to think differently than Westerners.”

This strongly resembles certain insinuations we have occasionally encountered elsewhere, but in which we cannot recognize ourselves, for we have never had the slightest intention of "orientalizing at all costs" anyone; what we would rather like is simply to induce those who are capable to "think differently than in modern ways," since the modern spirit is truly one with the anti-traditional spirit. Whether they then adhere to an Eastern or Western tradition, according to what best suits their abilities, is a matter for each individual, and it cannot concern us in any way; is it

Is it our fault, moreover, that everything related to tradition is so weakened in the West today that many may find it more advantageous to look elsewhere? We will not dwell on this further, and will only add that, despite the appearance of a rigorously established plan, the work as a whole remains rather confused in many respects, which always happens when one tries to cram too much into a single book, and also that the few additional explanations concerning the theory of "Universal Panpsychism" unfortunately do not succeed in making it much clearer; we fear, in any case, that the author's particular views play a greater role in this theory than traditional data.

• Albert Lantoine – *Freemasonry*

Extract from the General History of Religions. *(Aristide Quillet, Paris).*

This study, lavishly illustrated with interesting reproductions of ancient documents, begins with considerations on the "genesis of the concept of tolerance," which we have already discussed in connection with their publication as a separate article in *Symbolisme* (see the April-May 1947 issue, p. 136). The overall plan of the work in which it was intended undoubtedly required that Freemasonry be presented as a kind of "religion," whereas it is in reality something quite different, and this necessarily implies a certain confusion between the exoteric and esoteric domains. Moreover, we do not believe that this is the sole reason why the author too readily accepts the infiltrations of the profane spirit that occurred from 1717 onward; does he sufficiently realize that influences of this kind could in no way be exerted in an initiatory organization that had remained entirely what it should be? In any case, he

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He should be praised for not unduly disparaging, as so many others do, the old operative Freemasonry; however, when he considers that, as early as the 17th century, it had already been reduced to almost nothing and fallen into the hands of a majority of "accepted" Freemasons who had prepared the way for its transformation into speculative Freemasonry, there are many reasons to doubt the accuracy of such suppositions… We prefer the sections that relate to more recent and better-known periods; the author is more in his element there, which is essentially that of the historian, and, as such, he demonstrates, as usual, remarkable impartiality. In particular, he brilliantly debunks the widespread myth about the role that 18th- century French Freemasonry supposedly played in preparing for and during the Revolution, a myth initially launched by opponents of Freemasonry, but subsequently accepted, and perhaps even amplified, by Freemasons too influenced by the modern spirit. He clearly acknowledges, moreover, that the intrusion of politics in later times, whatever the reasons that may explain it in fact, can only be regarded as a deviation "towards overly earthly goals"; But he seems to hope that a correction in this regard is still possible, and certainly, no one wishes it so more than we do. As for his conclusion, where Freemasonry is envisioned as potentially becoming the "future citadel of religions," many will probably think that this is merely a beautiful dream; for our part, we would rather say that this role is not quite that of an initiatory organization that would remain strictly within its own domain, and that, if it can truly "come to the aid of religions" in a period of almost complete spiritual obscuration, it is in a rather different way, but one which, moreover, though less outwardly apparent, would nevertheless be all the more effective.

• C. Chevillon – *The Universal Tradition*

(Paul Derain, Lyon).

Because of the author's tragic death in 1944, we would like to be able to speak only highly of this posthumous book; but, unfortunately, we find in it the same vague and inconsistent character that we had always noted in his earlier works. There is, however, a certain improvement in that, once he has begun to speak of "Universal Tradition," he seems thereby to have finally abandoned the "anti-Oriental" attitude with which we had previously associated him; but this does not go very far, for it is essentially a matter of views that can only be called "philosophical," and therefore remain entirely external. This is not to say, of course, that there are not some perfectly valid reflections here and there, for example, on the purely negative character of modern science; but what we do not understand is how some can think that all of this expresses a more or less esoteric point of view. Furthermore, the author's exposition of what he believes to be "the spirit of ancient wisdom," as it supposedly emerges from the sum of the various traditional doctrines, is heavily influenced by ideas that are in reality quite far removed from it, and more particularly by the conception

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"reincarnationist"; therefore, the whole thing gives a rather disappointing impression, and it's best not to dwell on it further.

October-November 1947

• **Robert Ambelain – *Adam, Red God***

(Niclaus Publishers, Paris).

The title of this book is rather strange, especially since it contains nothing that explains or justifies the "divinity" thus attributed to Adam; but what is perhaps even more peculiar is that the opening chapter is clearly at odds with the following ones. This first chapter, in fact, is merely an exposition of the most divisive opinions of modern "criticism" concerning Genesis, without the slightest reflection that might at least suggest that the author does not entirely adopt them; now, it goes without saying that these opinions necessarily imply the formal negation of any esotericism in the Bible, while, in the subsequent chapters, he affirms, on the contrary, the existence of this esotericism, whatever his conception of it may be and whatever quality he presents as such. One might wonder if this is not the effect of a kind of "mimicry" allowing him to expose anything indifferently as if it were his own ideas;

If that were the case, it would at least prove that he has no firm convictions… In any event, the esotericism he has in mind here is primarily that which he attributes to the Ophites; but, since we know very little about them, nor indeed about most of the other so-called “Gnostic” sects, this allows us to talk about just about anything in relation to them: Kabbalah, Hermeticism, and many other things besides, and also to claim to link to them directly or indirectly everything in the Judeo-Christian world that presents itself with some esoteric character, from the Essenes to the Rosicrucians! We will certainly not attempt to unravel this chaos; What emerges most clearly is that, in the author's mind, this is a "Luciferian doctrine," which he apparently conceives as a "dualism," since he notably asserts that "belief in two opposing gods stems from a genuine esotericism"; moreover, he presents as "Luciferian" symbols that in no way possess this character. It would be very difficult to guess exactly what his intentions might have been; but the least one can say is that he demonstrates a strong taste for heterodoxy, and even for its worst forms, since he goes so far as to strive to find them even where there is not the slightest trace of them. In the last part, which is supposedly devoted to the "Rosicrucian doctrine," there is, in reality, nothing specifically Rosicrucian;

But the very idea of wanting to establish a link between Rosicrucianism and the "Luciferian doctrine" seems extremely suspect to us, as do certain reflections on
the subject of Freemasonry, or the frequent association of the words "Luciferian" and "initiatory," or even a certain phrase about Islam where we find this bizarre

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an obsession with the color green, which we have already had occasion to point out; in the presence of such things, one certainly cannot be too suspicious…

• Robert Ambelain – *At the Foot of the Menhirs*

(Niclaus Publishers, Paris).

In this other work, the subject is Celtic tradition, certainly more "appealing" than the previous one; the exposition itself offers nothing particularly new, but the author felt the need to mix in considerations drawn from modern science, which create a rather curious effect. Since this tradition is only very imperfectly known, it is understandable that he was somewhat at a loss for words in filling this volume, and, in the last part, the way he extricated himself from this challenge is quite ingeniously imaginative.

After reproducing the Bardic *Triads ,* he could think of nothing better than to supplement them… with the Pythagorean *Golden Verses !* The book ends with some information on the contemporary “Celtic movement,” which is not without interest, if indeed it is reliable; what unfortunately raises some doubt in this regard is that it is stated that it consists partly of “unpublished information, coming from private archives, which we will be able to clarify one day”; and, since it contains nothing that seems to justify such a reservation, this involuntarily reminds us of certain methods that occultists are all too accustomed to using… In any case, we can note a very astonishing and unexpected assertion, according to which “the Masonic ritual

"English rests entirely on Celtic traditions": this is an assertion that would be difficult to support, not merely by a few similarities such as are found between the most disparate traditional forms, but by truly serious arguments. Moreover, if the authors of this "speculative" deviation had actually been "Celtic initiates," it would not give a very high opinion of the knowledge they had preserved; and then, in all of this, what becomes of the ancient operative Freemasonry?

• Jean Mallinger – *Notes on the Esoteric Secrets of the Pythagoreans*

(Niclaus Publishers, Paris).

We have already seen previously* a work by the same author on Pythagoras; he continues his studies in the same direction, but the result, it must be said, is rather disappointing. Here, he deals with the Pythagorean *akousmata ,* precepts that are regarded as having an esoteric character and which must indeed have had it, for they are generally clothed in an enigmatic or symbolic form that can hardly be explained otherwise; but then there must have been something else there than what is there

* [October-November 1946.]

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We have seen Mr. Mallinger, for the interpretations he gives are neither particularly esoteric nor truly profound. Thus, on the "secret of the beans," he has gathered some more or less curious data, but from which no definite conclusion emerges; and, if on the other hand he has at least understood that the "bread" represents the traditional doctrine, his comments on this subject do not go beyond a very elementary level; but we find there an allusion to the "apostolic chain of occult traditions," about which we would very much like to know exactly how he understands it… A large part of the book is devoted to questions relating to birth and death, according to various "sources"; one often senses the influence of modern occult ideas, and also a keen preoccupation with "metapsychic" phenomena; in short, the rather abundant quotations from ancient authors are the most interesting thing in it. We also noted in passing a few rather amusing details: for example, the author reproduces without examination, concerning the "zodiacal gates," the error made by Mr. Carcopino that we pointed out here previously: he seems to believe that Hindus are Buddhists, and he even goes so far as to give, when speaking of Buddhist teachings, a reference to the *Rig-Veda !* Let us not forget to note also that, in closing, he could not resist mentioning again the "ancient and primitive state," the "esoteric" explanation of which we gave, if one can say so, in connection with his previous work; in our opinion, he would surely do much better to leave it "dormant."

- **Jean Mallinger – *Esoteric Secrets in Plutarch***

(Niclaus Publishers, Paris).

This book is of the same kind as the one we have just discussed, and in short, one could say about it in general terms; perhaps even the occult tendencies are shown in an even more pronounced way.
After outlining Plutarch's biography and noting the "difficulty modern man has in understanding certain esoteric truths," in which he is certainly quite right, the author first sets forth the "secrets of living fire." He seems to take too literally the assertions, which would benefit from symbolic transposition, that "fire is an animate being" and constitutes the "food of the gods." There is certainly much more to say about the ritual role of fire as a purifying element and as an agent of sacrifice. This chapter concludes with a somewhat unexpected comparison between Plutarch and Saint Francis of Assisi. Next come the "secrets of animated statues," on which the work of Egyptologists is primarily used. In fact, these are the rites by which statues or other objects were, in a sense, "vivified" to become vehicles of spiritual influence. But the author focuses primarily on the effects of these rites, considering the production of certain phenomena that were, in any case, of very secondary importance. A rather short chapter, which ultimately clarifies very little, is devoted to the "cosmosophical" theories attributed to a mysterious Erythraean mentioned in the treatise **De defectu oraculorum*,* theories which, in short, do not appear to differ from those of the Pythagoreans. Regarding the "arcana of Hades" and the "journey of the soul," the meaning of the symbolism is explained.

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is not clearly defined, and it seems that the author admits an interpretation "Reincarnationist" in the most literal sense of the word. Finally, the "secrets of the Sage," which are discussed in the last chapter, amount to little more than practical precepts which may be excellent in themselves, but in which, except perhaps for the reminder of the "law of silence," it would be very difficult to discover any esotericism whatsoever; and, when one sees what place "social" concerns hold in Mr. Mallinger's thought, one can wonder to what extent he himself followed the advice he gives his readers to "free themselves from all contemporary prejudice."

December 1947

- **Georges Barbarin – *The Riddle of the Great Sphinx***

(Adyar Editions. Paris).

In this new book, the author of *The *Secret of the Great Pyramid*,* which we discussed at the time* , first revisits some of the points he had already made there; moreover, he is more reserved in his assertions, no doubt because, in the interim, nothing remarkable seems to have occurred on the dates indicated, while important events have taken place to which none of these dates correspond. Generally, when predictions do not come true, their authors or those who propagate them are not very troubled in finding explanations for this fact; however, we must say that those given by Mr.
Barbarin's explanations seem rather confused and unsatisfactory. If we say that these are actually "internal" and "non-apparent" events, this certainly makes things more difficult to control, but at the very least, we should be able to find some indication of a change in spiritual or mental orientation around us, whereas there is none, and from this perspective, humanity has essentially only continued its downward spiral at an ever-increasing pace. On the other hand, it is all very well to say that "the Sphinx does not question the history of Israel, nor that of the Anglo-Saxons, nor even that of Europeans, but rather all of human history"; but then why continue to act as if it were otherwise, to adopt a purely European perspective, and to speak of "biblical humanity" as if everything belonging to other traditions were negligible? In the newer parts of the work, there are still many things that are more than questionable: for example, concerning the Luxor obelisk (the one that was transported to Paris and erected in the Place de la Concorde), it seems that some have attributed it to…

Nimrod; this extravagant hypothesis seems to appeal to Mr. Barbarin, who even imagines finding in the features of the Sphinx those of this same Nimrod, whom he considers,

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* [November 1936.]

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by a rather inexplicable double error, such as "the first Black Pharaoh"; moreover, if the Sphinx was contemporary with Nimrod, it is difficult to see how it could date back, as stated elsewhere, to the very beginning of the "Adamic cycle"! As for the enigma of the Sphinx itself, we do not believe the author can boast of having solved it, for what he says about it remains quite vague; we will not reproach him, but we regret that he did not at least formulate it in clearer terms. Ultimately, what is most interesting in all this, as a sign of certain current trends, is the obstinacy, which is far from unique to Mr. Barbarin, in announcing the advent of a "new spiritual era" and that of an "inner Church without hierarchy and without theologians"...

• Georges Barbarin – *The Hidden Destinies of Humanity*

(Astra Bookstore, Paris).

The title of this other work by the same author is somewhat ambitious, but the content is rather disappointing; the subtitle itself, "historical cycles," is not entirely justified, since, in fact, it deals only with minor details. It is primarily a matter of observing a kind of parallelism between the lives of certain sovereigns, or in the history of different peoples, with dates corresponding to more or less clearly defined intervals, seemingly indicating that certain periods bring back similar events or situations. Moreover, not all of these parallels are equally striking; a rather curious chapter, in this respect, is the one comparing the careers of Napoleon and Hitler; but why feel the need to introduce, even if only as a hypothesis, a "reincarnationist" explanation in this regard? Apart from that, it is certainly not without interest, but, ultimately, all this does not go very far and does not appear likely to contribute in any significant way to restoring the knowledge of traditional cyclic laws, so completely lost in the modern West.

• Marcel Hamon – *The Prophecies of the End Times*

(The New Edition, Paris).

The author first examines various prophecies concerning the "end times" and the signs that are to herald them, notably those contained in the Gospel itself, then the prophecy of Daniel, the oracles of the Sibyl, and the revelation of Saint Paul; but the main part of his work is that devoted to the Book of Revelation, whose true interpretation he, like so many others, has sought to uncover. What is particularly distinctive about the interpretation he proposes is that the text is divided into several parts, each constituting a distinct "vision" which, in a way, recounts, from different perspectives, the symbolic narrative of the same events to unfold during the seven successive ages; this is certainly only a hypothesis, but one that at least presents nothing implausible.

Unfortunately, as often happens, it is when the concerns

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"Current events" intervened, and things got a little complicated: this book was written before the end of the war, and, as subsequent events showed, it was truly an excessive honor to Hitler, if one can say so, to want to see him as the Antichrist!

January-February 1948

- **Abbé E. Bertaud – *Studies of symbolism in the cult of the Virgin***

(Société des Journaux et Publications du Centre, Limoges).

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this small volume is that it was written by a priest and published with the "imprimatur" of the ecclesiastical authority; this is indeed quite exceptional in our time, when official representatives of Catholicism, in general, tend to ignore symbolism or refrain from discussing it, especially when, as is the case here, it touches closely on matters of a truly esoteric nature. In an introduction on the "interpretation of the symbolism of things," the author defends it against the reproach made by some of being "conventional and arbitrary," but insufficiently in our opinion, for he does not seem to clearly grasp the essential principle of true traditional symbolism and its "non-human" character. He then studies the symbolism of the rose *(Rosa Mystica),* followed by that of the chaplet and the rosary, with fairly extensive considerations on numbers. Next comes a long, detailed explanation of the image (of Byzantine origin) of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, in which the symbolism of colors plays the principal role. There is certainly nothing particularly new in all this, but at least these concepts will thus be accessible to an audience that, very likely, would never seek them out where the author himself found them. It is only regrettable that he felt compelled to incidentally republish some crude anti-Masonic calumnies; did he somehow feel obliged to do so to make the rest of his work more palatable? He also makes the mistake of mistaking the Rosicrucians for a "very secret Masonic initiatory association," which he further accuses of "Luciferianism," relying on a passage from Jean Kostka's **Lucifer Unmasked* ,* without realizing that this passage actually refers to the Masonic degree of Rose-Croix (18th degree of the Scottish Rite), which, despite its title, is something entirely different. Moreover, one might wonder why he reproduced, without indicating its origin or offering any explanation, the emblem of Max Heindel's *Rosicrucian Fellowship ,* which certainly has nothing in common with authentic Rosicrucianism.

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• Mr. and A. Forlière – *Who was Joan of Arc?*

(Spelt Publishers, Paris).

The authors set out to examine, rather quickly in fact, the many enigmas presented by the life of Joan of Arc, classifying them into two categories, that of "historical enigmas" and that of "psychological enigmas". To resolve the former, they are inclined to accept the thesis according to which Joan of Arc was of royal blood; they mainly use in this regard the recent works of Mr. Jean Jacoby, but they do not seem to be aware of certain earlier works concluding in the same direction; it is quite surprising, in particular, that they do not even mention the book by Francis André (Mrs. Bessonnet-Favre), *La Pucelle et les Sociétés secrètes de son temps,* which, despite all the reservations it calls for from certain points of view, is undoubtedly one of the most curious that have been written on this subject. As for the "psychological enigmas", they want to explain them by "modern metapsychics"; We do not know if they are spiritualists, but, in any case, their way of seeing things amounts to making Joan of Arc a simple "medium"; they also seek to apply the same interpretation to the "supernormal" facts which are found in the lives of other rather diverse characters: Socrates, Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Catherine of Siena, Ramakrishna; in short, this is yet another example of the unfortunate confusion of the psychic and the spiritual, which is unfortunately so frequent among our contemporaries.

• D r A. Rattier – *On the Usefulness of Death*

(Paul Derain, Lyon).

This pamphlet, subtitled "An Essay in Scientific Philosophy," is based on the idea that "a logical interpretation of the laws governing the functioning of energy in the world can provide us with a clear explanation of the phenomenon of death." The author presents considerations inspired primarily by modern physics and biology, culminating in the concept of an "evolution" occurring through "the alternation of periods of life and periods of death." It is, in essence, a "reincarnationist" conception, and although he states that "the term 'reincarnation' should be understood in a broader sense than its etymological meaning," we fail to see what difference it makes whether these "successive lives" take place solely on Earth or on other celestial bodies, since all belong to the same corporeal world; the metaphysical impossibility remains the same in all cases. Moreover, the idea of "alternation" essentially implies the reduction of all reality to two worlds, this one and the "beyond"; how far we are, with theories of this kind, from the true notion of the indefinite multiplicity of states of being, and how difficult it is therefore for Westerners to escape the narrow frameworks to which their education has accustomed them!

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March 1948

• Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *Am I my Brother's Keeper?*

With an Introduction by Robert Allerton Parker ("Asia Press", The John Day Company, New York).

This book, the last published by our late colleague before his sudden and unexpected passing, is a collection of articles chosen from among those likely to reach a wider audience than most of his other works, and largely concerning, in its various aspects, the question of relations between East and West. As we have already reviewed these articles, we will limit ourselves, as we did for those in a previous collection, to listing them by indicating the journal issues in which we discussed them: *Am I my Brother's Keeper?* (June-July 1946 issue); *The Bugbear of Literacy* (June-July 1946 issue); *Paths that lead to the same Summit* (January-February 1947 issue); *Eastern Wisdom and Western Knowledge* (June-July 1946 issue); *East and West* (December 1946 issue); *"Spiritual Paternity" and the "Puppet Complex"* (October-November 1947 issue); and finally, *Gradation, Evolution, and Reincarnation,* a translation of which can be found in this very issue (October-November 1947 issue). – In his introduction, MR

A. Parker, after outlining the author's biography, sets out to define the traditional point of view he adopted throughout his work, and more particularly in his studies on art; he concludes, with regard *to Eastern Wisdom and Western Knowledge,* with a few lines addressed to us and to the *Études Traditionnelles,* for which we must express our sincere thanks.

April-May 1948

• J.-H. Probst-Biraben – *The Mysteries of the Templars*

(Editions des Cahiers Astrologiques, Nice).

In this volume, the author has largely reused the content of articles on the same subject that appeared a few years earlier in the *Mercure de France* and which we discussed previously (see the October-November 1946 issue). He has endeavored to clarify certain points and has given the historical account a more coherent development; he no longer seems as inclined to reduce everything to questions of financial operations (perhaps this view was primarily held by his deceased collaborator), but he draws a parallel between the role of the Templars in the East and certain modern conceptions of "colonial policy" that strikes us as truly unfortunate, especially since he goes so far as to mention, in this context, the case of European agents who entered into relations with Islamic *Turks* to...

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to deliver more perfectly and with less risk to what we can only consider a vulgar and contemptible act of espionage! It is also regrettable that, quite apart from the rather strange transcription of Arabic words, he has not corrected several inaccurate or questionable assertions: thus, he continues to take the famous "secret alphabet" completely seriously, without noticing the serious objection to its authenticity constituted, as we have pointed out, by the distinction between the letters U and V; and we cannot understand why he persists in calling the neo-Templar Maillard de Chambure a "disinterested author." On the question of the alleged idols and the "Baphomet" as well, things have remained more or less at the same point, and von Hammer's peculiar explanations have not been clarified any further; we will simply refer the reader to what we have already said on all of this. A newer section, and perhaps the most interesting part of the book in our opinion, concerns the relationship between the Order of the Temple and workers' guilds, both Eastern and Western, and particularly with builders' guilds. While some aspects remain hypothetical to a certain extent, they are at least quite plausible, and we believe there would be great benefit in directing more in-depth research in this area. For reasons we have explained elsewhere, it was primarily in the realm of Hermeticism and related traditional sciences that common ground naturally existed between chivalric initiation and trade initiations. Regarding Hermeticism, the author offers an explanation of some symbols that unfortunately remains somewhat superficial, and concerning the "graffiti" of Chinon Castle, he gives far too much weight, despite some reservations, to the more or less bizarre interpretations of Mr. Paul Le Cour. but at least we must praise him for having passed over in silence a certain inscription which he had thought he had found there, and which, as we were able to see for ourselves on site, was entirely imaginary… A final chapter is devoted to the “heirs and successors of the Temple”, real or supposed; we will not return to what is already sufficiently known on this subject, but we will note the rather enigmatic history of the “Gentlemen of the Temple” (this very name sounds somewhat strange and seems quite profane), whose existence, from the 15th to the 17th century, is proven by the documents of various trials in which they intervened; the fact that they were officially recognized makes it unlikely that they constituted a kind of “third order” of authentic Templar lineage, and we confess not to see what could have suggested the idea of a possible connection with the hypothetical Larmenius; Could it not simply be a matter of some external association, religious brotherhood or otherwise, which was tasked with managing certain properties that had belonged to the Order of the Temple, and from which it derived its name? As for the documents written in Latin and dating from the beginning of the 19th century, which the author has seen, it seems quite evident to us, based on numerous details, that they could only have originated from the Neo-Templars of Fabré-Palagrat (the mentions of Cape Verde and other places in some documents are pure fantasy), and we cannot even understand how there could be the slightest doubt about this. Furthermore, the initials VDSA do not stand for *Victorissimus Dominus Supremae Aulae* (?), but *for Vive Dieu Saint Amour,* the Templars' war cry, which their supposed successors had appropriated, like everything else.

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which they were able to learn, in order to give themselves some appearance of authenticity; how, after having specifically mentioned this war cry elsewhere, could they not have realized that it was the same thing they were talking about here? In any case, there are certainly interesting indications in this book from more than one point of view, but there would still be much to do, even assuming it were possible, to definitively elucidate the "mysteries of the Templars".

• *Ritual of Egyptian Freemasonry of Cagliostro*

Annotated by Dr. Marc Haven and preceded by an introduction by Daniel Nazib. (Editions des Cahiers Astrologiques, Nice).

Dr. Marc Haven had long intended to publish a complete edition of this Ritual, which constitutes an interesting document for the history of Freemasonry; but circumstances never allowed him to realize this project, nor to write the commentaries that were to accompany it. His notes, which are quite minimal and offer little clarification, are in reality merely simple indications that he had noted for himself in preparation for this work. As for the introduction, it contains nothing new for those familiar with Marc Haven's works, as it consists entirely of extracts taken from them, so that, ultimately, it is the text of the Ritual itself that constitutes the entire interest of this volume. In short, it is a "system" of high degrees, like so many others in the second half of the 18th century, and its division into three degrees, presenting a kind of parallel with those of Symbolic Freemasonry, stems from a concept of which other examples could be found. It hardly needs to be said that, in reality, there is nothing "Egyptian" here that could justify its name, unless one considers as such the pyramid that appears in certain paintings, without, moreover, the slightest explanation being given regarding its symbolism. One does not even find here some of those pseudo-Egyptian fantasies that are found in other Rites, and which, around this time, were especially popularized, so to speak, by the *Sethos* of Abbot Terrasson; Ultimately, the invocations contained in this Ritual, and in particular its use of the Psalms, as well as the Hebrew names found within it, give it a distinctly Judeo-Christian character. Its most distinctive feature, of course, is its "operations," which it might be interesting to compare with those of the Elected Cohens: the goal they pursue is apparently quite similar, but the methods employed differ in many respects. There is something here that seems to belong primarily to "ceremonial magic," and which, through the role played by "subjects" (the children designated as "Doves"), also resembles magnetism; certainly, from a purely initiatory point of view, all of this could give rise to some rather serious objections. Another point that warrants some remarks is the nature of the women's degrees: they largely retain the usual symbolism of adoption Freemasonry, but this was in truth only a mere semblance of initiation, intended to give an appearance of satisfaction to women who accused Freemasonry of neglecting them, and, generally speaking, it was hardly taken seriously, its role being limited to matters of a purely mundane nature.

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external activities, such as organizing "semi-secular" parties and providing assistance to charitable works. On the contrary, it seems that Cagliostro intended to confer on women a real initiation, or at least what he considered as such, since he had them participate in "operations" entirely similar to those of the male Lodges; this is not only an exception, but also, insofar as it concerns a Masonic Rite, a true "irregularity." If one were to go into detail, one would find other oddities, even in the male degrees, for example, the singular way in which the legend of Hiram is modified and explained there, and all this, taken together, would quite naturally lead to a question: Cagliostro obviously wanted, like many others, to establish a particular system, whatever its intrinsic value, based on Freemasonry; but did he ever truly possess a sufficiently thorough knowledge of it to adapt it correctly? Enthusiastic admirers of Cagliostro might be indignant that such a doubt could be raised, while his detractors would probably seek to draw excessive conclusions against him; in this, in our opinion, neither would be more right than the other, and there is a good chance that the truth about this enigmatic character is not to be found in either of these extreme opinions.

- **W.-R. Chéttéoui – *Cagliostro and Catherine II***

(Editions des Champs-Elysées, Paris).

Among the many plays written by Catherine II, three are directed against what she called the "visionaries," a term she used to encompass both Freemasons and members of various other initiatory organizations, as well as the more or less independent "enlightened" and "mystics"; and, of all, Cagliostro seems to have drawn her particular hostility. These plays are translated into French here for the first time: the first, *The Deceiver,* features a character who is clearly a caricature of Cagliostro; the second, *The Deceived,* is a violent attack against Masonic or similar organizations; as for the third, *The Shaman of Siberia,* it contains no direct allusion to them, whatever the translator may seem to think, but it is again clearly Cagliostro who is the target. Accompanying these three comedies is a short pamphlet entitled **The Secret of the Anti-Absurd Society Revealed by Someone Who Is Not a Member*,* which parodies Masonic rituals and catechisms, while simultaneously, in a way, contradicting them in the name of "common sense." The whole thing reveals a profound misunderstanding and is imbued with the most narrowly rationalist spirit, as one might expect from a disciple of the "philosophers"; it is therefore not in this material that one should look for reliable information on the subject matter, and these are certainly not literary masterpieces either, but they are undeniably a true historical curiosity. – This translation is preceded by a lengthy introduction, the beginning of which contains interesting information on Freemasonry in 18th-century Russia.

century; unfortunately, Mr. Chettéoui's knowledge of Masonic history does not seem entirely sound, as he makes certain errors, which

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These are, moreover, the kind of errors one makes quite commonly in the secular world: for example, the Golden Rosicrucian Order, even if it recruited its members from among Freemasons, did not in itself, contrary to what he claims, have any Masonic character. As for the mixture of very diverse things concealed by the vulgar term "Martinism," it is certainly not his doing, but he does not seem to have been able to disentangle it very precisely; and does he not believe that there were indeed "initiates" of Saint-Martin? Another, more astonishing, and even completely inexplicable, error is that which makes the Strict Observance a "form derived from the Order of the Templars annihilated forty years earlier"! Let us add that, after the Convent of Wilhelmsbad, there was no longer a Strict Observance, and that it was then replaced by the Rectified Scottish Rite; It is rather curious that we almost never know how to make this distinction, which nevertheless has some importance… The rest of the introduction contains an account of Cagliostro's career which, drawing mainly on Marc Haven, tends to present him as a true "Master"; one also gets the impression that, under the guise of Cagliostro, the author may have other characters in mind, such as Marc Haven himself when he wrote his *Unknown Master.*

We will not dwell on a few other details, such as the stories of healers which are far from having the "spiritual" importance attributed to them, or the completely unjustified belief in the authenticity of such pseudo-Gospels once disseminated by theosophists and their "Free Catholic Church"; but we must address a point that directly concerns us, and which recent events have made rather amusing for us, if not for everyone. Indeed, Mr. Chettéoui felt the need to include in his book a note worded as follows: "Despite the intellectual denial of a René Guénon, France has the singular privilege of possessing the highest initiatory school in the West; this school, with its proven methods, is destined to have an immense influence throughout the world." And, so that there can be no doubt as to what he is alluding to, the passage to which this note refers is immediately followed by a long quotation from the founder of a so-called "Divine School," which, alas! has since suffered misfortunes that are best left undiscussed, so that, in terms of "immense influence," the said School has left behind only the most unfortunate memories. It should be noted that there was no plausible reason to implicate us, for we have never before had the opportunity to say, at least not publicly,

Whatever the nature of the pseudo-initiation in question, we readily acknowledge that our attitude toward it could not have been other than that which was assumed of us, and it must be admitted that events have all too quickly and completely proven us right. Will Mr. Chettéoui believe us if we tell him that, precisely, in discussing his book, we were only waiting for this outcome, which we had been anticipating for some time now? Moreover, from what we have heard from various quarters, we believe that he himself must now have recovered from the illusions he harbored on this subject, while we await (we certainly hope so for his sake) that he will also recover from those he still harbors on a few other matters! *Sic transit gloria mundi…*

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June 1948

- **Gérard van Rijnberk – *The Tarot. History, iconography, esotericism***

(Paul Derain, Lyon).

This large volume is the result of long and patient research on everything related to the Tarot; it is appropriate, first of all, to praise the author for the conscience and impartiality he has brought to it, and for the care he has taken, contrary to what most often happens, not to be influenced by the unfounded assertions of occultists and by the many fables they have spread on this subject.
In the first part, he gathered everything that could be found in books and archival documents on the origin of Tarot and playing cards and on the period of their appearance in the various countries of Europe, and it must be said, he was unable to reach any definitive conclusion; he cleared the ground, in a way, by dispelling certain fanciful notions, but ultimately, the enigma remains unsolved, and, as it seems unlikely that any important documents in this regard escaped his notice, there is probably very little hope of ever solving it, at least on purely historical grounds. All that can be stated with certainty is that playing cards were known towards the end of the 13th century, especially in Mediterranean countries, and that the word "Tarot," whose etymology is impossible to discover, only began to be used in the 15th century, although the practice itself is surely older. The hypothesis of an Eastern origin, on which some have insisted so much, is by no means proven; and we would add that in any case, even if it were true that the Arabs played a role as "transmitters" here, it would nonetheless be inconceivable, for more than one reason, that the maps originated in an Islamic environment, so that the difficulty would simply be postponed. In this regard, we do not understand why so many more or less strange explanations are sought for the Arabic word *nâib,* which is perfectly well known and means nothing other than "replacement," "substitute," or "deputy."

Whatever the reasons for its adoption to designate cards, it has absolutely nothing in common with *nabî,* nor is it derived from a root "indicating a magical or divinatory action." Let us also note, while we are on the subject of such remarks, that the Arabic name for "games of chance"
It is not *qamar,* "moon," but *qimâr,* and *pagad* is certainly not an Arabic word, but in Hebrew *bagôd* means "deceiver," which can apply quite well to a trickster. Furthermore, the introduction of cards by the Romani is no more certain than anything else, and it would even seem that, on the contrary, it was in Europe that they learned their use; moreover, contrary to Vaillant's assertions, the Tarot was known in Western Europe before the Romani entered it; and thus all occult "legends" vanish as soon as one tries to subject them to serious examination! – In the second part, the author examines everything in the writings and works of art of classical antiquity and the Middle Ages that seems to him to have some connection with the ideas expressed by the symbolism of the

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The Tarot's arcana: some similarities are quite clear, but others are rather vague or distant. It goes without saying, moreover, that these parallels are in any case very fragmentary and concern only certain specific points; furthermore, it must not be forgotten that the use of the same symbols never constitutes proof of a historical lineage. We confess that we do not quite understand why, regarding these parallels and the ideas to which they relate, Mr. Van Rijnberk speaks of the "exotericism of the Tarot," nor what exactly he means by this and what difference he sees between it and what he designates, on the contrary, as its "esotericism." The third part, in fact, which he presents as "the result of meditations and personal inspirations," and to which he attributes an "esoteric" character, actually contains nothing of a deeper order than what precedes it, and, frankly, this part is certainly not the best in the book. At the head of the considerations relating to each of the major arcana, he placed a sort of motto formed of two Latin words, which undoubtedly purports to summarize more or less its general meaning; and what is quite amusing is that he visibly endeavored to find, in as many cases as he could, words with the initial letters SI! But let us not dwell further on this inconsequential whim; let us rather point out the extent of the bibliography and the interest of the reproductions of ancient documents contained in the plates which conclude the work, and add that this work, despite its erudition, is not at all boring and is even very pleasant to read.

- **Jean Chaboseau – *The Tarot. An Essay on Interpretation According to the principles of hermeticism***

(Niclaus Publishers, Paris).

This other book on the Tarot is written from a completely different point of view than the previous one, and, although much less voluminous, it apparently has greater pretensions, despite its modest designation as an "essay"; we will not dispute, moreover, that it may be legitimate to seek an astrological interpretation and a few others besides, provided that none of them is presented as exclusive; but is this condition met when one considers Hermeticism as "the proper basis of the symbolism of the Tarot"? It is true that we would first have to agree on the meaning of words; the author seems to want to extend excessively the meaning he attributes to Hermeticism, to the point of encompassing almost everything else, including even the Kabbalah; And, while he does a fairly good job of highlighting the relationship and difference between Hermeticism and alchemy, it is nonetheless a considerable exaggeration to claim, as he does, to identify the former with "Total Knowledge"! In fact, his commentary on the Tarot cards is not strictly limited to Hermeticism, for, while taking it as his starting point, he makes numerous connections with data from very different traditions; we certainly won't criticize him for this, far from it, but perhaps he hasn't sufficiently verified whether all of them are truly justified, and, in the way it's all presented, one senses a bit too much of the persistence of the "occultist" spirit; it would be wise, for example, to refrain from using the figure *of Adda-Nari*

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(that is to say *Ardha-Nari,* an androgynous combination of *Shiva* and *Parvati),* which has no connection with the Tarot except in the bizarre disguise imposed upon it by Eliphas Levi. The author's intentions are not always as clear as one might wish, and in particular, when he quotes some passages from our writings, we are not very sure, according to the context, that he understands them exactly as we ourselves understand them… Mr. Chaboseau has also attempted, after a number of others, to "reconstruct" the figures of the Tarot in his own way;
It goes without saying that, in such cases, everyone always puts a lot of their own particular ideas into it, and there is no reason to consider any of these "reconstructions" as being worth more or less than another; we believe it is much safer to simply refer to the ordinary representations, which, even if they have been somewhat distorted over time, are nevertheless very likely to have, on the whole, more faithfully preserved the original symbolism. In essence, the transmission of the Tarot is something very comparable to that of "folklore," if not simply a special case of it, and the preservation of symbols is ensured in the same way; in such a domain, any innovation due to individual initiative is always dangerous, and, like the literary arrangements of so-called "folk" tales, it can hardly do anything but either obscure or distort the meaning by mixing in more or less fanciful and in any case superfluous "embellishments."

These last reflections, of course, are not aimed more specifically at Mr. Chaboseau, like his predecessors, and we readily acknowledge that the "medieval" style he adopted for his designs does not have the implausibility of a supposedly Egyptian or Hindu Tarot, but this is only a matter of degree. Furthermore, we are only considering the symbolic value here; in a more "practical" vein, do we believe that the psychic influences undeniably attached to the Tarot cards, whatever their origin and nature, can still find effective support in all these arbitrary modifications of traditional figures?

September 1948

- **Louis Cattiaux – *The Rediscovered Message***

(Chacornac, Paris).

This book presents itself at first glance in a singular and even unusual form: each of its chapters is divided into two parallel columns, containing two series of aphorisms or detached verses that correspond to one another. It is evident that, under these conditions, it is impossible to provide any analysis or summary; moreover, it seems better suited to offering themes for meditation than to being read continuously from beginning to end. It must also be said that the correspondence between the verses in the two columns is not always very clear; but the best approach is for us to reproduce...

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The author himself kindly provided the following explanation: “The two columns appeared naturally as a reflection of Earth and Heaven and their necessary union, which constitutes the entire mystery of the incarnation of life and the awakening of consciousness in the one who inhabits it. Thus, the right-hand column is an equivalent, but not an explanation, of the left-hand column, and, by examining the multiple meanings of these double verses, one can connect them through the synthesis of the primal mystery of creation, always more or less present by virtue of the alchemical meaning.” Moreover, the multiplicity of meanings in question is not intentional, “but derives naturally from the mother root,” that is to say, from the alchemical meaning that the author considers the central and ultimate meaning of his work. If we understand correctly, this was written under a kind of inspiration, and that is why it contains more than what was expressly intended, although it is certainly difficult to determine the exact share of each of the two elements that collaborated on it.
In any case, under these conditions, we do not believe it can be said to be properly and effectively linked to a defined tradition; but at least the tendencies expressed within it are, in short, generally those of Hermeticism, and more specifically of Christian Hermeticism. We say generally because, if one examines it in detail, one notices that certain things, consciously or unconsciously, seem to have come from elsewhere: for example, we have observed some verses that quite strikingly recall certain Taoist maxims, and these are certainly not the least interesting. In any event, the paramount importance that the author gives to the alchemical meaning clearly defines the "perspective" of the whole, and it also marks its limits, which are none other than those of the Hermetic point of view itself. We must add that there are a few oddities here and there, of the kind one almost always encounters in writings dealing with Western forms of esotericism: for example, the titles in the left-hand columns are all formed by a series of anagrams based on the first, which creates a rather curious effect; but also, and more regrettably in our opinion, some statements are presented in an enigmatic form that seems to us quite useless; we will not dwell further on this flaw, however, as we know that the author himself has realized it and has largely eliminated it in the modifications and additions he has already prepared for a future re-edition. We do not know what "specialists" in Hermeticism, if indeed any truly competent ones still exist, will think of this book and how they will evaluate it; But what is certain is that it is far from indifferent and deserves to be read and studied carefully by all those interested in this particular aspect of tradition.

- **Gian Roberto Dell’Acqua – *The Stone***

This pamphlet, published in Milan without a publisher's name and written in often incorrect French, also relates to Hermeticism; but we must admit that we have been unable to discern the author's true intentions, or even how the content justifies the title. It begins with historical considerations based on a subdivision of the journey into twelve segments.

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of a zodiac sign, that of Pisces, by the equinoctial point; but the greater part is occupied by astronomical and other calculations, moreover quite complicated, the results of which are related to the dimensions of the Great Pyramid, which definitely still preoccupies many people! All of this, to which is added the examination of some symbolic figures of Rosicrucian origin, leads to the identification, as having a very particular importance, of the numbers 1331 (the cube of 11) and 313, the second being moreover regarded as a "contraction" of the first:
The author, without clearly stating his reasons, attributes immense importance to this "discovery," and he is so convinced of it that he concludes with this astonishing sentence: "No one has ever spoken of it openly, for it was agreed that this knowledge should remain hidden until the coming of Elijah." We, for our part, believe he is quite mistaken; and, as for the "coming of Elijah," we have not yet heard of it having occurred.

• Jean Bétesta – *Delta*

(At the author's home, Versailles).

At the beginning of this book, as well as in its very title, there are certain allusions to Masonic symbolism lead one to expect something other than what follows; the latter, it must be said, is rather disappointing. After general considerations that are clearly inspired much more by modern science than by traditional sciences, and a sort of very "evolutionary" sketch of the history of humanity, come several chapters devoted to the doctrines of as many Prophets, whose choice among others is not explained: Zarathustra, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus; their teachings are greatly simplified and even modernized, to such an extent that, in this presentation, it would be very difficult to glimpse the slightest truth of a transcendent order. Then, the author has tried to formulate, "drawing inspiration from the Word of the Prophets," what he calls "a rule of life for the individual and for the community of the industrial age"; there, alas! A collection of precepts whose banality surpasses anything one could imagine, and we could say, without exaggeration, that it occupies a middle ground between old books of "childish and honest civility" and more recent morality manuals for primary schools! Finally, the last part, entitled *"The Temple,"* sets forth the project of an organization which, despite the adoption of largely Masonic terminology, certainly has not the slightest initiatory character; dare we say that, if it were ever to come to fruition, it would, in short, be nothing more than yet another "pseudo-religion"? A few pages give the impression that the author must have been disappointed by both, or rather perhaps successively, the Church and Freemasonry; but was he truly capable of understanding either?

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1948 (uncertain month, between March and December)

• Swami Pavitrananda – *Common Sense about Yoga*

(Adwaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas).

The title of this small volume seems rather unfortunate to us, for we truly fail to understand how anyone could consider reducing *Yoga* to the narrow and purely profane perspective that characterizes what is commonly called "common sense." Moreover, the whole does not significantly alter the impression we had upon reading a translation of the first chapter, entitled *"The 'Mysteries' of Yoga,"* published in a special issue of *Cahiers du Sud* on India (see the December 1945 issue). This is not to say, of course, that everything in it is bad; We can only wholeheartedly agree with the author when he denounces certain false ideas and dubious fantasies, and when he protests against the numerous, more or less charlatan-like enterprises that, nowadays, cloak themselves in the usurped name of *Yoga,* and which owe their success solely to the complete ignorance of the vast majority of Westerners concerning matters of India (and we could just as easily say of the Orient in general); but while all this is certainly far from useless, it is nevertheless still, in a sense, only "negative." The following chapters successively consider, in particular, *Bhakti-Yoga,* Karma *-Yoga,* Jnânâ *-Yoga ,* and *Râja-Yoga ;* we believe we can give a sufficient idea of how these subjects are treated by saying that it is entirely in accordance with the conceptions of Vivekananda, under whose patronage the book is, moreover, placed. The author explicitly states that his intention was "to expound the science of *Yoga* in as simple and rational a manner as possible"; the truth is that his views appear somewhat simplistic, and he doesn't seem to fully grasp that there are realities of a supra-rational nature. What we find most striking in all writings of this kind, as we have already noted, is that they reveal nothing of the initiatory character of *Yoga,* a character which, in essence, constitutes its very core, but which is clearly incompatible with the modern tendency to "popularize" everything.

December 1948

• Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *Time and Eternity*

(Artibus Asiae, Ascona, Switzerland.)

In this posthumous work, our late colleague revisited and expanded upon ideas he had already partially presented in various articles, but which are now brought together and coordinated into a coherent whole. He has

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especially concerned with demonstrating the unanimous agreement of the various traditional doctrines on the question of the relationship between time and eternity, using numerous references drawn, in as many successive chapters, from Hindu, Buddhist, Greek, Islamic, and Christian doctrines; all this is obviously impossible to summarize, and we must content ourselves with indicating some of the main ideas that emerge. Time, which includes the past and the future, is, as a whole, absolutely continuous, and it is only logically and not in reality that it can be divided into parts; by this continuity, which constitutes duration, it contrasts with eternity, which, on the contrary, is the timeless and durationless "instant," the true present of which no temporal experience is possible. Eternity is reflected or expressed in the "now," which, at all times, both separates and unites the past and the future; And even this "now," insofar as it is truly without duration, and consequently invariable and immutable despite the illusion of "movement" due to a consciousness subject to the conditions of time and space, is not truly distinct from eternity itself, to which all time is always present in its totality. The essential and absolute independence of eternity from time and all duration, which most moderns seem to have so much difficulty conceiving, immediately resolves all the difficulties raised concerning Providence and divine omniscience: these do not refer to the past and the future as such, which is merely the contingent and relative viewpoint of a being conditioned by time, but rather to a total simultaneity, without division or succession of any kind. In this respect, we can compare the relationship of eternity to time to that of the center to the circumference: all points on the circumference and all radii are always simultaneously visible from the center, without this view interfering in any way with the movements occurring on the circumference or along the radii, which here will respectively represent determination (the chain of events in the ordered path of the circumference) and free will (centripetal or centrifugal movement), with which there can consequently be no conflict. Another consequence concerns creation: God, by virtue of not being in time, creates the world "now" just as much as he created it or will create it; the creative act is truly timeless, and it is only we who situate it at a time that we relate to the past, or who illusorily represent to ourselves, as a succession of events, what is essentially simultaneous in fundamental reality. In time, all things are incessantly in motion, appearing, changing, and disappearing; in eternity, on the contrary, all things remain in a state of constant immutability; the difference between the two is properly that of "becoming" and "being." Time itself would, moreover, be inconceivable without this timeless "instant" that is eternity, just as space would be inconceivable without the "non-dimensional" point; and it is evident that whichever of the two terms gives the other its full meaning is also the more real in the true sense of the word.

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• Mircea Eliade – *Yoga Techniques*

(Gallimard, Paris).

This small volume, which deals successively with doctrines, techniques proper, the relationship of *Yoga* to Hinduism in general, and finally the specific technique of *Yoga* in Buddhism and Tantrism, undoubtedly offers far greater understanding than most Western works on the same subject. This is immediately apparent from the author's careful placement of quotation marks around all words that he rightly considers inappropriate or inadequate for the intended meaning, words that Orientalists, on the contrary, commonly use without the slightest hesitation and without realizing how much they distort the exposition of the doctrines.

Yet, we would have preferred to see him renounce the use of some of these words at least, such as "philosophy", "religion", "magic", when they are applied to things to which they cannot truly be applied; why must it be that he seems to have been held back halfway by a kind of fear of straying too far from the commonly accepted terminology?
On the other hand, however, he does not shy away from certain neologisms, which may not all be equally useful, but among which there is at least one that seems excellent to us and which we cannot approve of highly enough: it is the word "enstasis" used to render *samadhi,* and which is perfectly accurate, while that of "ecstasy," besides implying an erroneous assimilation with mystical states, constitutes in itself a huge misinterpretation; ecstasy, in fact, is literally a "going out of oneself," whereas, quite the contrary, it is a "returning inward" that is actually at issue here. It is impossible for us to point out all the very accurate observations that appear in the course of the exposition; And, if this work sometimes raises questions that it doesn't fully resolve, this is perhaps an added merit in such cases, for it reflects a very commendable concern not to oversimplify matters and not to conceal the real difficulties, unlike the many proponents of " *Yoga* for all." There are also, nevertheless, points that warrant some reservations, such as a clearly inadequate conception, from a traditional point of view, of Hindu orthodoxy and how it was able to incorporate doctrines and practices that were originally foreign to it; this remains far too superficial and suggests syncretism rather than synthesis, which is certainly very far from the truth; and it will inevitably remain so as long as we do not dare to clearly and unequivocally affirm what the tradition contains that is essentially "non-human." On the other hand, the care taken to distinguish the different varieties of *Yoga,* while certainly justified in itself, perhaps risks obscuring their fundamental unity; and when some of these varieties are described as "popular," it is necessary to clarify precisely what is meant by this, as it may seem to contradict the distinctly initiatory character otherwise attributed to *Yoga.* We also regret certain concessions to ethnologists' theories on "vegetation cults" and other such matters; but, on the other hand, we find here and there, particularly in the conclusion, some of the truly remarkable ideas that

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We have already noted these points recently in an article by the same author (see the July-August 1948 issue). To conclude, we will quote a few sentences from the last pages: “The archetype of ‘action’ is the Creation of worlds, the cosmogony. In a certain sense, the yogi repeats on his own being the transformation of chaos into Cosmos; again, an internalization of cosmogonic Creation.”

Before detaching himself from the Cosmos, he aligns himself with it, repeating it and appropriating its rhythms and harmonies. But this “repetition” is not an end in itself; the “cosmization” that follows a psychomental chaos is only a step toward final liberation. The yogi must isolate himself from matter, withdraw from the Cosmos; this withdrawal is equivalent to the conquest of immortality… Reality can only belong to immortality; being recognizes itself only insofar as it is eternal. Thus, the yogi who has succeeded in withdrawing from the Cosmos and from the incessant and painful cosmic circuit, by the very fact of having abolished his human condition, obtains immortality, which is freedom, autonomy, bliss, and eternity: he has freed himself from death through the death of his very humanity. In short, this book certainly deserves to be read by all those who are seriously interested in these issues, and there are very few of which we can say the same.

January-February 1949

The Société des Gens de Lettres has just awarded our Director, Mr. Paul Chacornac, the 1948 *Maria Star* Prize for his important work on the Count of Saint Germain. We are delighted with this well-deserved distinction and extend our warmest congratulations to the author.

• Marco Pallis – *Peaks and Lamas*

(Alfred A. Knopf, New York).

Although this work has already been discussed here twice (June 1940 and January-February 1947 issues), we must return to it again to point out an important chapter entitled " *The Presiding Idea,"* which the author added specifically for the American edition, and in which he endeavored to define more explicitly the principle of unity that is characteristic of Tibetan civilization and distinguishes it from other forms of traditional civilization. That this principle is found in Buddhist doctrine is beyond doubt, but such an observation is nevertheless insufficient, because in countries other than Tibet where it has been exercised, the influence of Buddhism has produced very different results. In fact, what primarily characterizes Tibetan civilization is the predominant importance given to one element of this doctrine, to a degree found nowhere else. and this element is the concept of the *Bodhisattva state,* that is, "the state of the fully awakened being who, although no longer bound by the Law of Causality which he has transcended, nevertheless continues freely to follow the vicissitudes of the Cycle of

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Existence by virtue of its identification with all creatures that are still subject to egocentric illusion and the suffering that results from it." An apparent difficulty arises from the fact that the state of *Bodhisattva* is, on the other hand, commonly considered to constitute a lower and preliminary degree to that of *Buddha ;* yet this hardly seems to apply to the case of a being "who has not only realized Emptiness, in a transcendent sense, but who has also realized it in the World itself, in an immanent sense, this double realization being moreover only one for him," since the supreme Knowledge that he possesses is essentially "without duality." The solution to this difficulty seems to lie in distinguishing between two different uses of the same term *Bodhisattva :* in one case, it is used to designate the saint who has not yet attained the ultimate degree of perfection, and who is only on the verge of doing so, while in the other, it actually designates a being "who is identical with the *Buddha* by right of Knowledge, but who, for the benefit of creatures, 'recapitulates,' as it were, certain stages for 'exemplary' reasons, in order to 'show the Way,' and who, in this sense, descends back into the Circle rather than remaining there, whatever impression this may make on beings always ready to be deceived by outward appearances." This way of considering the *Bodhisattva* thus corresponds properly to what we have called "descending realization," and naturally, it also has an obvious connection with the doctrine of the *Avatars.* In the remainder of the chapter, which we cannot fully summarize here, Mr. Pallis endeavors to dispel the confusions to which this conception of the *Bodhisattva* might give rise if it were falsely interpreted, in accordance with certain tendencies of the current mentality, in terms of "altruistic" or so-called "mystical" sentimentalism; he then provides some examples of its constant applications in the spiritual life of Tibetans. One of these examples is the practice of invocation, widespread throughout the entire population; the other concerns particularly the way of life of the *naldjorpas,* that is, those who are already more or less advanced on the path to realization, or whose aspirations and efforts are, at the very least, definitively fixed in this direction, and whom Tibetans, even those relatively ignorant, regard as truly the protectors of humanity, without whose "non-active" activity humanity would soon be irretrievably lost.

• Gaston Georgel – *Rhythms in History (2nd ed.)*

(Editions « Servir », Besançon).

We reviewed this book when its first edition appeared (October 1937 issue); at that time, the author, as he himself indicates in the foreword to the new edition, knew almost nothing of the traditional data on cycles, so that it was essentially by a fortunate coincidence that he managed to rediscover some of them from a purely "empirical" point of view, and in particular to suspect the importance of the precession of the equinoxes. The few remarks we made at the time led him to pursue more in-depth studies, which we can only applaud, and we must express our gratitude for what he is willing to say on this subject in our

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This concerns him. He has therefore modified and supplemented his work on numerous points, adding several new chapters or paragraphs, including one on the history of the question of cycles, correcting various inaccuracies, and removing the dubious considerations that he had initially accepted based on the word of occult writers, for lack of being able to compare them with more authentic data. We only regret that he forgot to replace 539 and 1078 years with the correct numbers 540 and 1080, which the foreword seemed to indicate he would do, especially since, conversely, he did correct 2156 years to 2160, which introduces a certain apparent discrepancy between the chapters that respectively relate to these various cycles, which are multiple of one another. It is also somewhat unfortunate that he retained the expressions "cosmic year" and "cosmic season" to designate periods of a duration far too short for them to be truly applicable (those precisely of 2,160 and 540 years), and which would rather be only, if you will, "months" and "weeks", especially since the name "month" would in short be quite suitable for the course of a zodiacal sign in the precession of the equinoxes, and that, on the other hand, the number 540 = 77 × 7 + 1 has, like that of the sevenfold "week of years" jubilee (50 = 7 × 7 + 1) of which it is in a way an "extension", a particular relationship with the septenary. These are, moreover, almost the only minor criticisms we have to make this time, and the book, as a whole, is very interesting and stands out advantageously from certain other works which, concerning cyclical theories, display much more ambitious and certainly very little justified claims; it is naturally limited to the consideration of what can be called the "small" historical cycles, and this within the framework of Western and Mediterranean civilizations only, but we know that Mr. Georgel is currently preparing, in the same line of thought, other works of a more general character, and we hope that he will soon be able to bring them to a successful conclusion as well.

• Émile Ruir – *Nostradamus, his Prophecies, 1948-2023*

(Éditions Médicis, Paris).

We have already discussed this (October-November 1945 issue) [*] from another work by the same author, also relating to the predictions of Nostradamus, which, like so many others, he interprets according to his own particular ideas. In this work, following a study of the life and work of Nostradamus, the best part of which, in our opinion, consists of the criticisms he levels at some of his colleagues, we find, in short, with new developments, roughly the same ideas on the "Adamic era," the dual chronology of *the Epistle to Henry, King of France II* (who, according to Mr. Ruir, is not Henry II, but apparently the famous "Great Monarch" to come), the series of the so-called "Asiatic" Antichrists (there are no fewer than eight!) and the invasions led by them, which leads us

[*] *[The collapse of Europe according to the prophecies of Nostradamus.]*

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Until 1999, there was the "Earth's shift," which probably corresponds to the year 2023, although this isn't explicitly stated, and finally the "Millennium," which, as expected, will undoubtedly coincide with the "Age of Aquarius." We have already expressed our opinion on all of this sufficiently, and we don't believe it necessary to dwell on it again; let us simply note once more, on this occasion, that such fantasies unfortunately always seem to enjoy more success among our contemporaries than they deserve, otherwise their authors would surely not feel the need to constantly republish them in more or less varied forms; and this is indeed yet another "sign of the times"!

• Sri Aurobindo – *The Enigma of This World*

(Adrien Maisonneuve, Paris).

This pamphlet is a translation of an article written in English in 1933, in response to a rather "sentimental" question posed by Maurice Magre about the reasons for suffering and evil in this world. The very apt answer is that all possibilities must be realized, and that it is division and separation that gave rise to evil, insofar as these possibilities are considered in isolation from one another and from their principle; in short, what we consider evil, that is to say, as a negation, is only such as a consequence of our ignorance and our limited perspective. What is more debatable is that Sri Aurobindo seems to admit not only a spiritual evolution for each individual, but also an evolution in the sense of a "progression" of the world as a whole; this is an idea that strikes us as quite modern, and we do not quite see how it can be reconciled with the very conditions of the development of any manifestation. On the other hand, if we understand correctly what is not explicitly stated, he seems to consider "ascending realization" as insufficient in itself and as needing to be complemented by "descending realization"; at least certain expressions allow us to interpret his thought in this way. However, why then oppose liberation as he understands it to what he calls an "escape from the world"? As long as the being remains in the Cosmos (and by this we do not mean only this world, but the totality of manifestation), however elevated the states it can attain, these are still only conditioned states, which have no common measure with true liberation. The latter can only be obtained in all cases by leaving the Cosmos, and only then can the being "descend," at least in appearance, without being affected in any way by the conditions of the manifested world. In other words, "descending realization," far from being opposed to "ascending realization," on the contrary necessarily presupposes it; it would have been useful to specify this so as to leave no room for ambiguity, but we want to believe that this is what Shri

Aurobindo means when he speaks of "an ascent from which one does not fall back, but from which one can take flight in a winged descent of light, strength and *Ananda* ".

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- **PB Saint-Hilaire and G. Monod-Herzen – *The Message of Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram***

(Adrien-Maisonneuve, Paris).

This small, beautifully edited volume is divided into two parts. The first is a kind of summary of Sri Aurobindo's principal teachings; it seems that particular emphasis was placed on their "adaptation to the conditions of the time," an adaptation which, it appears to us, sometimes goes a little too far in its concessions to contemporary mentality. The second part is a description of the Pondicherry Ashram and its various activities; this description, and especially the accompanying photographs, also give an impression of "modernity" which, it must be said, is somewhat unsettling; one notices at first glance that Europeans have been there…

- **Marie-Louise Dubouloz-Laffin – *Le Bou-Mergoud, Folklore Tunisian***

(GP Maisonneuve, Paris).

This large volume, illustrated with drawings and photographs, relates more specifically, as its subtitle indicates, to the "popular beliefs and customs of Sfax and its region." It demonstrates, and this is no small merit, a much more "sympathetic" spirit than is usually found in these kinds of "surveys," which, it must be said, too often have a whiff of "espionage." This is also why "informants" are so difficult to find, and we fully understand the reluctance most people feel to answer more or less indiscreet questionnaires, especially since they cannot, of course, guess the reasons for such curiosity about things that are perfectly ordinary to them. Mrs.

Dubouloz-Laffin, both by virtue of her position as a professor and her more understanding mindset, was certainly better placed than many others to achieve satisfactory results, and it can be said that, generally speaking, she succeeded admirably in carrying out the task she had set herself. This is not to say, however, that everything here is without flaws, and this was undoubtedly inevitable to some extent: in our opinion, one of the main ones is the tendency to present as purely regional many things that are in reality common to all of North Africa, or even to the entire Islamic world. Furthermore, in certain chapters, information concerning the Muslim and Jewish elements of the population is mixed together in a somewhat confused manner; it would have been useful not only to separate them more clearly, but also, with regard to Tunisian Jews, to distinguish between what is uniquely their own and what is merely borrowed from the surrounding Muslim environment. Another thing, which is certainly a minor detail but makes reading the book a little difficult, is that the Arabic words are given with a truly extraordinary spelling that clearly represents a local pronunciation heard and noted down.

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in a very approximate manner; even if it were deemed appropriate to retain these bizarre forms, although we do not quite see their purpose, it would at least have been good to indicate the correct forms alongside them, without which certain words are practically unrecognizable. We will also add a few remarks that relate more to the conception of folklore in general: it has become customary to include very disparate things within it, and this can be justified more or less well depending on the case; but what seems quite inexplicable to us is that it also includes events that actually occurred in known circumstances, and without either "beliefs" or "customs" having anything to do with them; we find here some examples of this kind, and it is thus, in particular, that we do not see at all how a recent and duly documented case of "possession" or "haunted house" can possibly fall under the category of folklore. Another peculiarity is the astonishment Europeans always show at things that, in a milieu other than their own, are perfectly normal and commonplace, to such an extent that they pay no attention to them at all; one often senses that, if they haven't had the opportunity to observe them themselves, they have great difficulty believing what they are told about them; we have also noticed traces of this state of mind here and there in this work, although less pronounced than in others of the same kind. As for the content of the book itself, the greater part concerns first the *jinn and* their various interventions in human life, then, a more or less related subject, magic and sorcery, which also incorporate medicine; Perhaps the space given to things of this nature is a little excessive, and it is regrettable that, on the other hand, there is almost nothing on "folk tales," which, however, must be abundant in the region studied as well as everywhere else, for it seems to us that this is, ultimately, what constitutes the very essence of true folklore understood in its strictest sense. The last part, devoted to "marabouts," is rather cursory, and it is certainly the least satisfactory, even from a purely "documentary" point of view; it is true that, for more than one reason, this subject was probably the most difficult to treat; but at least we do not find there the unfortunate prejudice, too widespread among Westerners, which wants this to be something foreign to Islam, and which even tries to discover there, which it is always possible to do with a little "scholarly" imagination, vestiges of some cults that disappeared several millennia ago?

April-May 1949

- **Cyrille Wilczkowski – *Man and the Zodiac: An Essay in Synthesis typological***

(Éditions du Griffon d'Or, Paris).

The author himself acknowledges that this work has a "hybrid character," and indeed, although he believes that the two parts into which it is divided complement each other,

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In reality, they have little connection to each other. In the first part, his primary aim was to "define the position of astrology in the eyes of modern consciousness," which necessarily implies some very unfortunate concessions. One must realize this: either astrology is a traditional science, in which case it is obviously opposed to the modern mind and has no need to concern itself with seeking an impossible agreement; or it is a so-called "scientific astrology," which is merely a secular science like any other and has little in common with true astrology except its name. In any case, one must choose and never conflate these two entirely different conceptions. However, in the second part, which is devoted to zodiacal symbolism, he mainly appeals to "ancient doctrines," although he also mentions "recent research," the results of which seem to us rather hypothetical. Regarding traditional data, it must also be said that, unfortunately, the information relating to it is not always drawn from perfectly reliable sources. Furthermore, the presentation sometimes lacks clarity: for example, we were unable to understand exactly what is meant by the "key images of the Zodiac"; the interpretation of certain myths is often confused or vague, and it is not always clear that they have a very direct relationship with this or that zodiac sign. Nevertheless, there are considerations here that are certainly far from uninteresting, and it would only be desirable for the author to revisit them, giving them greater clarity and separating them from the heterogeneous elements stemming from the influence of modern ideas. We should also commend him for attaching very little importance to the "predictive" aspect of astrology, and for expressly stating that his study has nothing to do with occultism.

- **Georges Barbarin – *I and Myself or Spiritual Doubling***

  (Astra Bookstore, Paris).

Mr. Barbarin writes a great deal, perhaps too much, for what he has to say is often of rather limited interest, and, in this as in all things, we would prefer quality to quantity. This new volume presents itself, at least in its first chapters, in the form of a kind of psychological autobiography: he believes he has discovered within himself two distinct and even more or less opposed elements, which he calls "I" and "Me," and which he, moreover, corresponds respectively to "individuality" and "personality," reversing the normal meaning of these two words in accordance with Theosophical terminology. His main originality, therefore, lies in calling "I," for reasons that are not entirely clear, what others call "Self"; but, in truth, he is greatly deluded about the scope of his observations, for all of this is certainly of a much more psychic than spiritual order, and, in fact, one sees nothing in it that transcends the individual human level, so

It seems that these are simply two parts of the "I," and that, in any case, we remain far removed from that transcendent principle which is the true "Self," which, moreover, cannot lend itself to such analyses. The author then generalizes his discoveries by applying them to human communities, and then he arrives at the "God-Man"; the pages where he interprets the dual nature in his own way

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His claims about Christ are even more questionable than anything else, despite his attempts to base them on certain Gospel texts from which he ultimately tries to derive what he calls a "Charter of Unity." Ultimately, all of this is rather simplistic and can only contribute to maintaining confusion in the minds of our contemporaries, who are already too prone to imagine finding "spirituality" where there isn't even a trace of it; psychological and sentimental platitudes are, alas, much more accessible than true spirituality.

Deodat **Roché – *Catharism***

(Institute of Occitan Studies, Toulouse).

This little book is primarily interesting for the historical information it contains; however, its interpretation of Cathar doctrine, or at least what little is known of it, warrants serious reservations, as it is heavily influenced by the ideas of Rudolf Steiner and the author's own reincarnationist beliefs. Furthermore, the identity of Catharism with Manichaeism may not be as certain as is often claimed, and in any case, the true nature of Manichaeism remains to be determined, as this question is far from being fully resolved. In any case, we do not quite see how the assertion that the Cathars were Manicheans can be reconciled with that they were "purely Christian", nor with that their doctrine was "an expression of Platonism"... In the appendices of the work, we find a reproduction of the article on a Cathar dish which we have already mentioned previously (October-November 1945 issue); we will also point out notes on Manichean crosses or those considered as such and on Mithraic symbols; and, in this regard, we cannot help but find rather astonishing the assertion that "the chrism was originally Mithraic";

Might there not be some confusion here between a symbol which in reality belongs to the universal tradition and a form which is derived from it, but which presents a much more particularized character? This is not impossible; but, when we see it stated elsewhere, in an even more precise way, and without the slightest proof to support it, that "the *labarum* of Constantine was formerly a Mithraic standard", we end up fearing that the author does not always sufficiently distrust his imagination.

• **Saint-Yves d'Alveydre – *Mission of the Sovereigns***

(North-South Editions, Paris).

This reissue of a book that had long been out of print was very useful, because the works of Saint-Yves d'Alveydre are among those that are talked about much more than they are read, hence many erroneous ideas about the concepts that are presented therein. This one, in particular, will allow us to see firsthand what "Synarchy" was in the author's own mind, which certainly has nothing in common with what has caused so much fuss in recent years and to which it seems

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Although its promoters deliberately used the same name to create confusion—and they succeeded all too well, since the books and articles published on the subject have spread all sorts of gross errors about Saint-Yves and his work—the introduction to this new edition aims precisely, while remaining apolitical, to set the record straight, and it does so admirably, reiterating some of the information that previously appeared in this very publication (July 1935 and March 1936 issues), as well as some of the remarks we made in **Le Roi du Monde*.*

We will draw particular attention to two points which seem to us very important: the first is a comparison of dates from which it clearly follows that, when Saint-Yves published the two principal works in which his synarchic system is expounded, namely The Mission of *the Sovereigns* and The *Mission of the Jews,* he had not yet entered into relations with any representative of the Eastern traditions, so that it is impossible to attribute this conception to influences from such a source, as some have claimed. It is true that Saint-Yves himself presented Synarchy as an application of a metaphysical and cosmological doctrine secretly preserved within the various traditional forms, and in particular the Brahmanical and Judeo-Christian traditions, but undoubtedly this assertion, like many others, should not be taken too literally; For our part, we believe (and we noted this incidentally in * *La Grande Triade*,* p. 142) that it is primarily inspired by Fabre d'Olivet, from whom he clearly borrowed far more than he ever acknowledged, while also striving to "Christianize" him, so to speak, and to whom he even owes some rather astonishing errors concerning the Hindu tradition. The second point we wish to emphasize is the true nature of Saint-Yves's relationship with the occultists, a relationship that was essentially limited to friendly relations with a few of them, on a purely personal basis, and without him ever in any way adhering to their "movement."

Nor even that he approved of it, for on the contrary, he always expressed many reservations in this regard; this is certainly far from what the occultists themselves wanted people to believe, who saw fit to make him one of their "Masters" and who, after his death, sought to monopolize his memory, we might even say exploit it, which inevitably resulted in his work being undeservedly discredited. – As for the book itself, we will leave it to each reader to form their own opinion by reading it; but we must admit that, rereading it ourselves after some forty years, we experienced some disappointment, despite the undeniably interesting insights it contains. It seems to us that there is at least a certain exaggeration in presenting the entire history of Europe, from the beginnings of Christianity, as if there had never been, on the part of either the Church or the sovereigns, anything but exclusively political concerns; and, moreover, there are, on more than one point, assertions that are difficult to reconcile with true traditional notions. Although the author makes some allusions to "Initiation," it is very difficult to know exactly what he meant by it; it is highly likely that what he designated as such, at least at the time he wrote this book, was, in his mind, nothing more and nothing other than a teaching of a higher degree than that which is actually given.

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in the Universities, and this too is rather disappointing, because what such a conception lacks is precisely what, from an initiatory point of view, constitutes the very essence. As for Synarchy itself, if it is taken only as a project for a "European constitution," it is certainly as good as any other, and the objections that could be raised against it would concern much less the principle itself than the modalities of the proposed organization, and also the probably insurmountable difficulties that its implementation would encounter under conditions like those of the present era.

• *The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha*

Presented by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and JB Horner (Cassell and Co, London).

Although the share allocated to each of the two collaborators is not explicitly stated, it seems clear to us that it is the late AK
Coomaraswamy, who is the author of the account of the Buddha's life and Buddhist doctrine that constitutes the first part of this volume, and where we find, in an abridged and somewhat simplified form, the interpretation he had already given in other writings, notably in *Hinduism and Buddhism** Since the main points are already known to our readers, we will simply reiterate that one of the most important is the refutation of the common misconception that Buddhism denies the "Self," which naturally has, among other consequences, that of correcting the "nihilistic" conception that some have held of *Nirvana.* The alleged Buddhist "atheism" is also dismissed by the observation that "between the immutable will of God and the *Lex Aeterna,* there is no real distinction," and that " *Dharma,* which has always been a divine name, is still, in Buddhism itself, synonymous with *Brahma ."* It should also be noted that the author very rightly insists that neither the doctrine of causality nor that of the chain of actions and their effects implies, contrary to another widespread misconception, the vulgar idea of "reincarnation," which, in reality, does not exist in Buddhism any more than in any other traditional doctrine. The following selection of texts, undoubtedly due to Miss Horner, comprises a set of extracts grouped according to the questions to which they relate, some of which appear to have been retranslated from Pali, while others are reproduced from various existing English translations.

* [Report from August 1946.]

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• R. Pouyaud – *From “Cubism” to traditional painting*

(General Printing Office of Nièvre, Clamecy).

We have already discussed here another pamphlet by the same author (see the January-February 1946 issue)[*]; in it, he has managed to summarize, in just a few pages and with remarkable clarity, a number of essential concepts concerning painting from a traditional perspective: laws relating to the picture plane and its movement (modern artists have too often forgotten that a painting is a flat surface), and the symbolism of forms, numbers, and colors. In the historical overview with which he begins, we should note in particular a curious parallel, concerning the role of certain symbolic forms, especially the spiral, between the Celtic and Christian traditions; this is certainly a subject that deserves to be explored in greater depth. The only criticism we have to make is this: firstly, there is talk of "cycles" applying this word only to the period of development of civilizations and particular traditional forms, and without anything indicating that these are only minor cycles which are integrated into others much more extensive; then, in another place, there is incidental mention of the cycle corresponding to the duration of the precession of the equinoxes; this may result in some confusion among unprepared readers who, having until then believed that it was only a notion of an exclusively historical order in some way, will not see what relationship can exist between these two things, nor consequently what is the true nature of cyclic laws. Of course, this does not affect the substance of this study in any way, and, in order to better understand the spirit in which it was written, we can do no better than to reproduce the last lines: "The painter, if he wants to make a traditional work, must adapt the universal symbols to the technique of the plane, as the first cubists foresaw it, make his work a microcosm in the image of the macrocosm by using cosmic laws; he will thus constitute the new form proper to the future cycle, but he must not forget that, in order to fully benefit from the illumination which constitutes the traditional way, he must constantly have the universal in mind and that at such a height individualities no longer count."

• François Haab – *Divination of the Latin alphabet*

(Pro Libros, Paris).

This small volume presents itself, according to its subtitle, as an "introduction to the knowledge of the hieroglyphic symbolism of letters"; that such symbolism does indeed exist, that is to say, that the entire alphabet originally had an ideographic meaning, is beyond doubt for us, nor for anyone with any traditional knowledge on the subject; but we certainly cannot say that the argumentation on which the author wants to base his interpretation of the alphabet

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[*] *[Under the sign of the Spiral: Vézelay, initiatory center.]*

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Latin is neither particularly solid nor convincing. First of all, one cannot help but feel a certain astonishment at seeing him assert that the Latin alphabet is "the purest of the Greek alphabets," and that, for this reason, it is the most suitable for "symbolizing the fundamental deities of Greek mythology." As for his understanding of this mythology, he summarizes it in this sentence: "Greek mythology is a knowledge of Truth based on rationality, poetry, and religious intuition, and it proposes an ethic." We see nothing particularly profound or truly traditional in all of this. When he also presents this same mythology as "a true Western Old Testament," to which Christianity is much more closely linked than to the Hebrew Old Testament, we recall that a very similar idea has already been put forward by Mr. Paul Le Cour, and this comparison is truly quite unfortunate… As for the interpretation of the alphabet itself, it consists of relating each letter to a divinity in whose name this letter appears, most often as an initial, but sometimes also in another position (the Greek and Latin names are, moreover, mixed here in a way that may seem somewhat arbitrary); and these relationships are explained by means of considerations on the form of the letters, which, to say the least, are extremely vague and have nothing "striking" about them; with such methods, anyone could easily, following a preconceived idea, find almost anything in any figure whatsoever, and all this is certainly very far removed from true symbolism. There is yet another reason for suspicion: not only are authentically Latin letters taken into account, but also, and equally so, additions made in very recent times (the distinction between the letters *i* and j, *u* and v, not to mention w), which cannot have any real symbolic value. The author disagrees, but the reason he gives, envisioning a kind of development of the alphabet that continued into modern times, ultimately leading to its perfection, only makes the matter seem even more serious and rather disturbing. This becomes immediately apparent upon reading this sentence from his summary: "This ideography of the letters of the Latin alphabet is perhaps the intuitive and deliberate creation of the ancient priesthood, but perhaps it is also quite naturally the hidden outcome of a subconscious process of the collective human mind." The first term of this alternative expresses a traditionally correct view, but the second, which is in reality the one that would necessarily have to be accepted for the development in question to make sense, corresponds only to one of those current conceptions, with a "psychoanalytic" tendency, the danger of which we have already pointed out. It appears that this is only a first glimpse of a more considerable work; it is therefore necessary to await the latter before making a definitive judgment, but this introduction does not give a very favorable impression, and the ideas expressed herein would need to be corrected on many points to make them, we will not even say valid, but simply acceptable from the traditional point of view.

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- **D r Hubert Benoît – *Metaphysics and Psychoanalysis, Essays on the Problem of Human Realization***

(Mazarine Publishers, Paris).

We would have liked to be able to speak favorably of this work, because the author certainly had a very laudable intention in itself, but he very unfortunately undertook to apply it to something which, by its nature, was in no way suited to it; and, as he declares that it was particularly thanks to our books that he discovered traditional metaphysics, this does not fail to give us some concerns about what some may try to derive from it… It is certainly very good to seek to link any science whatsoever to principles of a metaphysical order, and it is even the only way to give it or restore to it the “legitimacy” which it lacks in its current state; but for this to be the case, it must really be a science capable of being “legitimized”, and not one of those specific products of the modern mentality which are ultimately nothing but elements of pure and simple subversion, as is the case with psychoanalysis; It would be just as worthwhile to try to give a traditional basis to spiritualism or any other aberration of the same kind! Curiously enough, the author, although he does not seem to have a very clear idea of initiation (does he not go so far as to speak of an "initiation through the study of books"?), has noted that there is a resemblance between initiatory transmission and psychoanalytic transmission, but he has not noticed in the least that the latter constitutes, in this respect, only a truly satanic "counterfeit", acting "in reverse" like certain operations of sorcery; since he mentions our books, we can only encourage him to refer to what we have written on this subject and which is, however, quite clear. We will not dwell on the content of the work, which is, in short, what it can be under these conditions, and we will limit ourselves to two or three remarks that we truly cannot avoid, for it is necessary to prevent certain misconceptions from taking hold. At the beginning, there is indeed recourse to some notions of metaphysics and especially of traditional cosmology, but subsequently, these disappear almost entirely, except with regard to certain considerations of "polarity" for which, moreover, there was absolutely no need to refer to psychoanalysis and its specialized language; everything ends up being submerged, so to speak, in the mythology of "complexes," "prohibitions," "compensations," "fixations," and so on. Furthermore, when one encounters in the midst of all this some term borrowed from traditional metaphysics, one should not assume that it is always used in its normal sense; Indeed, even where there is talk of "total being", what is conceived as such never actually exceeds the realm of individual possibilities.

The author (and this is quite surprising coming from someone who has read our books) seems to have no idea whatsoever of the multiple states of being, so that he reduces everything to the proportions of mere human individuality; and, while it is rather difficult to say exactly what the "realization" he envisions might be, what is certain in any case is that, despite the final allusion to the "opening of the third eye," it is not a question of initiatory realization, just as, when the "Self" is

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Conceived as "pure thought," this is something that bears a rather uncanny resemblance to the Cartesian "soul" and is certainly very far removed from *the unconditioned Atman ;* as for "Independent Intelligence," also rather peculiarly called "Divine Reason," it is, at best, a mere reflection of *Buddhi* in the individual. As far as we are concerned, one conclusion is inescapable following these observations: we cannot be too quick to warn against the applications that anyone might claim to make of what we have presented, without our knowledge or approval, and we do not intend to accept any responsibility for them whatsoever; like all other distortions of misunderstood traditional doctrines, these are things that it is obviously impossible to prevent, but at least it is always possible, as soon as one becomes aware of them, to formally disavow them, and, however unpleasant this may sometimes be, it is an obligation we will not fail to fulfill.

December 1949

- **Mircea Eliade – *The Myth of Eternal Return. Archetypes and repetition***

(Gallimard, Paris).

The title of this small volume, which, moreover, does not exactly reflect its content, seems to us rather unfortunate, for it inevitably brings to mind the modern conceptions to which the term "eternal return" is usually applied. These conceptions, besides confusing eternity with indefinite duration, imply the existence of an impossible repetition, clearly contrary to the true traditional notion of cycles, according to which there is only correspondence and not identity. In short, in the macrocosmic order, there is a difference comparable to that which exists, in the microcosmic order, between the idea of reincarnation and that of the passage of being through the multiple states of manifestation. In fact, this is not what Mr. Eliade's book is about, and what he means by "repetition" is nothing other than the reproduction, or rather the ritual imitation, of "what was done in the beginning." In a completely traditional civilization, everything proceeds from "celestial archetypes": thus, cities, temples, and dwellings are always built according to a cosmic model; another related question, and one which, in fact, differs much less from this one than the author seems to think, is that of symbolic identification with the "Center." These are things we ourselves have often had occasion to discuss; Mr. Eliade has gathered numerous examples referring to the most diverse traditions, which clearly demonstrates the universality and, we might say, the "normality" of these conceptions. He then moves on to the study of the rites themselves, always from the same point of view; but there is one point on which we must make a serious reservation: he speaks of "archetypes of secular activities," whereas precisely, as long as a civilization retains a character

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Entirely traditional, there are no profane activities: we believe we understand that what he designates as such is that which has become profane as a result of a certain degeneration, which is quite different, because then, and by the same token, there can no longer be any question of "archetypes," the profane being such only because it is no longer connected to any transcendent principle; moreover, there is certainly nothing profane in the examples he gives (ritual dances, the coronation of a king, traditional medicine). In what follows, he speaks more specifically of the annual cycle and the rites linked to it; naturally, by virtue of the correspondence that exists between all cycles, the year itself can be taken as a reduced image of the great cycles of universal manifestation, and this is what explains in particular why its beginning is considered to have a "cosmogonic" character; The idea of a "regeneration of time," which the author introduces here, is not very clear, but it seems to refer to the divine work of preserving the manifested world, in which ritual action is a true collaboration, by virtue of the relationships that exist between the cosmic and human orders. What is regrettable is that, for all this, one feels compelled to speak of "beliefs," when it is a matter of applying very real knowledge and traditional sciences that have a completely different value than secular sciences; and why must one also, through another concession to modern prejudices, apologize for having "avoided any sociological or ethnographic interpretation," when, on the contrary, we cannot praise the author too highly for this abstention, especially when we recall how much other works are marred by similar interpretations?

The final chapters are less interesting from our point of view, and are certainly the most debatable, because what they contain is no longer an exposition of traditional data, but rather reflections that belong specifically to Mr. Eliade and from which he attempts to derive a kind of "philosophy of history"; moreover, we fail to see how cyclical conceptions could in any way be opposed to history (he even uses the expression "refusal of history"), and, in truth, history can only truly have meaning insofar as it expresses the unfolding of events in the course of the human cycle, although lay historians are certainly hardly capable of grasping this. If the idea of "misfortune" can in a sense be attached to "historical existence," it is precisely because the cycle unfolds in a downward movement; And need we add that the final considerations, on the "terror of history", seem to us to be a little too inspired by "current events" concerns?

- **Georges Dumézil –** ***The Indo-European Heritage in Rome***

  (Gallimard, Paris).

Mr. Dumézil started from a completely layperson's point of view, but in the course of his research, he came across certain traditional data, and from this he draws deductions that are not without interest, but which are not always entirely justified and which cannot be accepted without reservations, especially since he almost constantly strives to support them with linguistic considerations that are, to say the least, highly hypothetical. As

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Moreover, this data is necessarily very fragmentary; he has focused exclusively on certain things, such as the "tripartite" division, which he seeks to find everywhere, and which does indeed exist in many cases, but which is nevertheless not the only one to be taken into account, even when limiting oneself to the field in which he has specialized. In this volume, he has undertaken to summarize the current state of his work, for it must be acknowledged that, at the very least, he does not claim to have arrived at definitive results, and moreover, his successive discoveries have already led him to modify his conclusions several times. The essential point is to identify the elements which, in the Roman tradition, seem to go back directly to the time when the peoples we have come to call "Indo-European" had not yet split into several distinct branches, each of which subsequently pursued its existence independently of the others. At the heart of his theory lies the consideration of the triad of deities constituted by Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus, which he sees as corresponding to three social functions; moreover, it seems that he seeks a little too much to reduce everything to a social perspective, which risks quite easily leading to a reversal of the actual relationship between principles and their applications. There is even in his work a certain rather "legalistic" turn of mind that clearly limits his horizons; we do not know, moreover, whether he acquired this by devoting himself primarily to the study of Roman civilization, or whether, on the contrary, it was because he already possessed this tendency that it attracted him more particularly, but in any case, the two things seem to us to be not entirely unrelated. We cannot go into the details of the questions that are addressed in this book, but we must at least point out a truly curious observation, all the more so since a significant part of these considerations rests upon it. The point is that many narratives presented elsewhere as "myths" reappear, with all their main features, in what is given as the history of early Rome, from which one would have to conclude that the Romans transformed into "ancient history" what was originally in reality their "mythology." Judging by the examples given by Mr. Dumézil, there seems to be some truth in this, although perhaps this interpretation should not be overgeneralized; it is true that one could also ask whether history, especially when it comes to "sacred history," can not, in certain cases, actually reproduce the myth and offer a kind of "humanized" image of it, but it goes without saying that such a question, which is essentially that of the symbolic value of historical facts, cannot even arise in the modern mind.

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January-February 1950

• **Francis Warrain – *The Theodicy of the Kabbalah***

(Véga Publishing, Paris).

This posthumous book comprises three distinct studies; the first is the study on *the Sephiroth ,* which was published in *Le *Voile d'Isis** from October to December 1930 (and not in 1931 as stated), and the third, which appears here only as a kind of appendix, is an article entitled: " *The Eternal Nature According to Jacob Boehme,"* also published in *Le *Voile d'Isis* *, in the special April 1930 issue. Therefore, only the second part is unpublished: this is a work on *the Divine Names* that was found among the manuscripts left by the author; the editor seems to think that he had not had time to complete it fully, but we have some reason to believe that this is not the case, as we recall hearing that he had

already completed several years before his death. It contains many interesting considerations on the classification of the Divine Names, their meaning, their numerical value, etc.; those relating to "plenitudes" and especially to "permutations" are, in truth, quite complicated, and in a way that can sometimes even seem somewhat artificial. Regarding "permutations," the author has focused primarily on interpreting in all its details a "pantacle" taken from Bartolocci's *Bibliotheca Rabbinica ,* where it appears without any indication of origin, and which, in certain respects, seems to us to be more closely related to what is called Christian Kabbalah; in this regard, it is regrettable that, throughout the book, no clear distinction is made between Jewish Kabbalah and Christian Kabbalah, for, although the latter was naturally inspired by the former, they are nonetheless two different things in more than one respect. Returning to Bartolocci's "pantacle," it seems to us rather doubtful that the author intended to find more in it than it actually contains; but what perhaps raises the most serious objection is his use, in his exposition, of Wronski's terminology, which in any case does little to enhance its clarity; moreover, whatever he may have thought of it, we truly fail to see any significant connection between Kabbalah and Wronski's conceptions. The volume's general title also calls for an observation: F. Warrain himself placed it at the beginning of his study on *The Sephiroth,* but it has always struck us as rather questionable, since the word "theodicy" has a well-known philosophical meaning that can hardly be applied to the perspective of Kabbalah; But this very fact is quite characteristic of F. Warrain's tendencies, who, at heart, was certainly always much more of a philosopher than an esotericist, and who often seems to have been less concerned with expounding the Kabbalah itself than with philosophical views about the Kabbalah. Perhaps, moreover, this is what the editor meant when he wrote these lines: "These three studies, and *The Sephiroth*

In particular, they constitute an attempt to discover the concepts equivalent to the images and concrete terms by which the Ancients expressed metaphysics.
It is not a question of restoring the mental state of the Ancients, but of combining the resources of the intuitive world that they cultivated with the discursive processes adopted.

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by our mentality." In short, this clearly defines the nature of this work, but it also shows, at the same time, the limits within which it can be used for a true understanding of Kabbalah and the degree of importance that should be attributed to it in this respect, which is obviously essential for anyone who places themselves from the strictly traditional point of view, that of the Ancients, and is therefore unwilling to be satisfied with "concepts" and "abstractions."

• Stanislas de Guaita and Oswald Wirth – *The Problem of Evil*

Foreword and postscript by Marius Lepage (Editions du « Symbolisme », Levallois-Perret).

We know that Stanislas de Guaita died without having been able to complete the work he had undertaken under the general title **The Serpent of Genesis* *; only two volumes had appeared, and of the third and final volume, * *The Problem of Evil*,* he had written very little: summaries of a few chapters and various fragments, more or less fully written. It is these fragments, corresponding to four of the seven chapters that the work was to have, like the preceding ones (and even then, only the first two are relatively complete), that, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his death, have been gathered together in this volume, along with the commentaries that Oswald Wirth, who had been his secretary, had added, and which he, too, never finished. It has been a very long time, about a quarter of a century, since we became aware of these commentaries, and, as far as we can remember, it does not appear that their author subsequently modified much of them. We were struck at the time by the rather curious contrast they present with Guaita's text, not only in form, which would have been, in short, quite natural, but also in substance, for, although they were certainly written with the intention of continuing his work as far as possible, the truth is that they proceed from a completely different mentality and correspond to a totally different point of view. Guaita, who was intellectually far superior to most of the other representatives of the occultist school at the end of the last century, nevertheless necessarily shared something of their way of thinking, and this can still be seen here, particularly in the importance he gives to certain things that certainly did not deserve it, such as, for example, the extraordinary digressions of Louis Michel de Figanières; like the others, he knew almost nothing of Eastern doctrines, and, in particular, he never saw those of India except through theosophical distortions; But, despite these flaws which somewhat "date" his work, and which would likely have improved with age, everything he wrote demonstrates a "quality" that is incomparable to other works of the same school, such as the popularizations of a Papus.

In his work on the *Problem of Evil,* he drew primarily on the work of Fabre d'Olivet, and one certainly cannot complain about that, even if, upon closer examination, one must acknowledge that he places a somewhat excessive trust in the interpretations of this author, which, it must be said, are not all equally sound, but which, taken together, nonetheless represent something whose equivalent would be difficult to find elsewhere in the West. The point of view of

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Guaita's approach here, like that of Fabre d'Olivet himself, is essentially cosmological, and one might even say metaphysical to a certain extent, since cosmology, traditionally understood, can never be separated from metaphysical principles, of which it constitutes one of the most direct applications. On the other hand, with Oswald Wirth, we "descend," as it were, to a very different level, because, as others have already noted, his perspective is almost exclusively psychological and moral; this is, of course, the main reason for the contrast we mentioned earlier, and the comparison of the two texts is undeniably interesting precisely because of this difference. Yet this is not the only difference worth noting:

Guaita had established the schematic plan of his work on the Tarot, but, although this provided him with the general framework, the content of most of the chapters actually has only a very distant relationship with the corresponding "arcana";
Wirth, on the contrary, remained constantly attached to the Tarot, or at least to that part of its multiple meanings that resonated with his own perspective, so that, in fact, what he offered is a commentary on the Tarot, or one of its aspects, much more than Guaita's own thought; and this is a curious example of how each person, while wishing to address the same subject, inevitably approaches it from their own particular "perspective." Marius Lepage, for his part, in the chapters he added in the form of a long "postscript," which are among the most interesting in the book, made no attempt whatsoever to continue what his predecessors had done, and he was certainly right, for that would have been, it seems, a truly hopeless undertaking; but he happily complemented it by bringing other perspectives. He sets forth the solutions to the "problem of evil" found in Christianity and Buddhism, where they take on a more or less sentimental hue, and then the purely metaphysical one given by *Vedanta ;* what is no less remarkable is the considerable space given in these considerations to Eastern doctrines, which, together with Guaita's attitude in this regard, and indeed also with Wirth's, forms a new contrast in which one can see a characteristic mark of two eras which, though not very far removed from one another, are nonetheless clearly distinct. In a final chapter, Marius Lepage examines some modern conceptions, which can be more or less strictly described as "rationalism";
It is perhaps regrettable that he seems to give them, throughout his presentation, an importance that we cannot help but find somewhat disproportionate, and especially that he did not state more explicitly that they cannot, under any circumstances, be placed on the same level as traditional conceptions. Nevertheless, this work constitutes an important contribution to the study of a question that has given rise to so much controversy and, without claiming to resolve all the difficulties, it illuminates and clarifies some of its main aspects in an excellent way.

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March 1950

- **Ananda K. Coomaraswamy – *Hinduism and Buddhism***

Translated from English by René Allar and Pierre Ponsoye (Gallimard, Paris).

We must inform our readers of this excellent translation of our late colleague's book, *Hinduism and Buddhism,* which has just been published in the *Tradition* series ; as we have already reviewed (see the August 1946 issue) the English edition of this important work, which corrects a great number of errors and confusions made by Orientalists, we will not elaborate on it again. We will only recall that the two somewhat parallel parts into which it is divided clearly highlight the concordance that actually exists between Hinduism and Buddhism; It is understood that, with regard to the latter, it is not a question of more or less late and deviant schools, like those whose heterodox views Shankaracharya refuted, but of the true original Buddhism, which resembles as little as possible what has been presented under this name in the West, where, as the author says, "Buddhism has been admired above all for what it is not".

April-May 1950

- **J.-H. Probst-Biraben – *Rabelais and the secrets of Pantagruel***

(Editions des Cahiers Astrologiques, Nice).

Rabelais's esotericism has been discussed quite often, but generally in a rather vague way, and it must be acknowledged that the subject is far from easy; indeed, in many passages of his works, one has the impression of being in the presence of a "secret language," more or less comparable to that of the *Fedeli d'Amore,* although of a different kind; but it seems that, in order to translate it, one would need a "key" which has not yet been found. This question is, moreover, closely linked to that of the initiation that Rabelais is said to have received: that he was attached to Hermeticism seems beyond doubt, for the esoteric knowledge he demonstrates clearly belongs to the "cosmological" order and never seems to transcend it; They therefore correspond well to the proper domain of Hermeticism, but it would still be good to know more precisely which Hermetic current is involved, and this is quite complex, because, at that time, Hermeticists were divided into various schools, some of which had already deviated in a "naturalistic" direction; without wishing to go further into this question, we must say that, precisely, on the initiatory orthodoxy of Rabelais, opinions are quite divided. In any case, Mr. Probst-Biraben has shown himself to be very cautious, and we must thank him for not having launched into, as often happens in

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In such cases, he ventured into overly hypothetical speculations; he certainly did not claim to solve all the enigmas, which would probably be impossible, but he at least gathered enough data and clues of all kinds to make it a very worthwhile book. We will say at once that the part we find least convincing, concerning the esoteric origin of the ideas expressed by Rabelais, is that which relates to his social conceptions, for we do not see in them a clear mark of such an influence, and it is possible that they came rather from an exoteric source, that is to say, from his Franciscan origins, just as his views on education may very well have been inspired for the most part by his secular relationships with contemporary "humanists". Moreover, and this is much more important from our point of view, there are in his work a great number of symbols that clearly belong to Hermeticism, and the enumeration of them is quite curious and could give rise to many comparisons; there are also scattered allusions to astrology, but above all, as one would expect, to alchemy, not to mention everything that makes *Pantagruel* a veritable "repertoire of conjectural sciences." Let us note in this regard that, if we knew precisely to which schools the various characters whom Rabelais ridicules here and there belonged, this might allow us to realize to some extent, by contrast, which one he himself belonged to, for it seems that there must have been some rivalries between esoteric schools under these criticisms; In any case, what is undeniable is that he knows very well how to distinguish between the vulgar alchemy of the "gold makers" and true spiritual alchemy. One of the most extraordinary, but also most overtly apparent, things is the descriptions of an obviously initiatory nature found in the fifth book of *Pantagruel ;* it is true that some claim that this book is not his, because it was only published ten years after his death, but the most likely explanation is simply that he left it unfinished and that disciples or friends completed it according to the instructions they had received from him, for it truly represents the culmination, in a way, of his entire work. Another question of particular interest is that of Rabelais's relationship with the "craftsmen" and their initiatory organizations; In his writings there are many more or less disguised allusions, but still quite clear for those who know these things, to certain rites and signs of recognition which can hardly have any other origin than that, for they have a very marked “journeyman” character, and, we will add, it may very well be from this side that he gathered, on the Pythagorean tradition, the knowledge which seems to be indicated by the use which he very frequently makes of symbolic numbers; that he was affiliated to one of these organizations as a chaplain is a very plausible hypothesis, and, moreover, it must not be forgotten that there were always close relations between the hermetic and craft initiations, which, despite the differences in form, all properly refer to the same domain of the “lesser mysteries”. On all the points we have just indicated, Mr. Probst-Biraben's work provides abundant details, which it is naturally impossible to summarize; this book is certainly one from which one will not read without deriving much benefit, and, by its very moderation and the mistrust it demonstrates toward overly risky interpretations, it should give one pause for thought.

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to academic critics who deny esotericism, or at least to those among them whose bias in this regard is not entirely irremediable.

• G. Van Rijnberk – *Episodes from Esoteric Life [1780-1824]*

(P. Derain, Lyon).

This book contains a large number of previously unpublished and highly interesting documents, which shed a curious light on certain Masonic circles at the end of the 18th century, and on how many ideas and practices infiltrated them that, in reality, had little in common with true esotericism, and which one might even wonder if they were not introduced precisely to divert the attention of these circles from it, as we have already noted, particularly with regard to magnetism, which certainly played a leading role in this. The main part consists of extracts from the correspondence of J.-B.

Willermoz and Prince Charles of Hesse-Cassel, both holders of the highest degrees of various Masonic Rites, and both of whom were interested, in slightly different ways, but essentially equivalent, in the matters to which we have just alluded. First of all, regarding Masonic Rites, there are some inaccuracies to point out in Mr. van Rijnberk's comments: for example, he seems not to know that the Knights Beneficent of the Holy City are the last degree of the Rectified Scottish Rite, whose name he does not even mention (which is also common to him and other authors who have spoken of Willermoz); On the other hand, he seems to believe that Swedenborg, who most likely was never a Freemason, personally exerted influence within Swedish Freemasonry, whereas all that can be admitted in this regard is that some of his disciples disseminated certain of his ideas there, and this as mere individual views. But these questions occupy only a small place in the book, and the most important part relates to magnetism, the "revelations" of somnambulists, and other such matters; it is naturally impossible to examine all of this in detail, and we will limit ourselves to a few general remarks. Certain comparisons clearly show that, on many points, and especially concerning their descriptions of posthumous states, the somnambulists were, probably subconsciously, influenced by the conceptions of several contemporary "mystical philosophers." This is certainly not surprising, and in our opinion, the opposite would have been quite surprising, but it is an observation that is always worth noting. Alongside somnambulists, and perhaps not always very clearly distinguishable from them, there were what the author calls "writing mediums," an expression which is an anachronism here, since it belongs to the vocabulary of spiritualism, which only emerged much later; moreover, he sometimes uses the very word "spiritism" in a way that is obviously quite inappropriate. What is true is that magnetism, in a way, paved the way for spiritualism (it is even one of the reasons that makes it most clearly suspect), and that somnambulists were, in a way, the precursors of mediums, but there are nevertheless significant differences that should not be overlooked. Among these "writing mediums," the one who undoubtedly played

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The most important role is that of Willermoz's "Agent," about whom occultists spread so many unfounded legends and whose true identity Madame Alice Joly had already discovered and revealed; but there were also other, much less well-known cases of "Automatic Writing," including that of Prince Charles of Hesse himself, which, unlike that of Madame de Vallière, occurred independently of any magnetic practice. Another point that is perhaps quite closely related to this is that, according to certain passages in his writings, the Prince of Hesse admitted, at least in particular cases, a kind of "reincarnation"; moreover, the way in which he conceived it is not very clear, so that it would be rather difficult to say whether it is indeed reincarnation proper, as later taught by spiritualists and theosophists; But what is beyond doubt is that it was indeed at that time, and specifically in Germany, that this idea began to emerge.

We will not attempt to elaborate on Mr. van Rijnherk's own views on this subject, which are clearly influenced by "neo-spiritualist" conceptions; but we cannot help but note incidentally the rather amusing mistake that led him to confuse *nirmâna* with *nirvâna !* In the case of the Prince of Hesse, bizarre phenomena occurred, visions or luminous manifestations (especially in connection with an image of Christ), to which he attributed an "oracular" character and of which it is difficult to determine to what extent they were, to use current terminology, "objective" or merely "subjective".

In any case, these phenomena, which also appear to have been caused by "works" carried out according to the ritual of the Initiated Brothers of Asia, are not unlike the "passes" of the Elected Coëns, among whom, it must be said, a truly excessive importance was also attributed to these things; that they are taken, when they appear in a more or less accidental way, as external "signs" of the acquisition of certain results, this is still admissible, but what is not at all permissible is to consider in any way their attainment as the very goal of an initiatory organization, for it is quite impossible to see what real interest all this can have from a spiritual point of view. Much could be said on this subject, for it is quite certain that the taste for extraordinary phenomena, to which is also linked the passion for magnetic experiments, was from then on, as it has always remained thereafter for Westerners, one of the principal obstacles that diverted certain aspirations and prevented them from reaching their normal conclusion. We will only add that, in the case of the Prince of Hesse, the phenomena in question sometimes took on an extravagant character that they at least seem never to have had among the Elected Coëns; and we will also mention, in the same vein, the evocative operations of von Wächter, whose more pronounced appearance of "ceremonial magic" contributes to making them particularly suspect, not to mention the fabulous stories that surrounded them and whose purpose remains unclear. – In a second part, there is discussion of some "enigmatic and mysterious figures"; One chapter is devoted to the Marquise de La Croix, who gives the impression of being an unbalanced person, and another to certain aspects of the Count of Saint-Germain's life, and more particularly to his

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relations with Prince Charles of Hesse. The most curious is that which retraces the eventful career of Mr. Bernard Müller, alchemist or so-called alchemist, who had assigned himself the mission of "organ", in his own expression, of a fantastic "chiliasm"; having gained the confidence of the famous Professor Molitor, he was introduced by him into German Masonic circles, took advantage of it to enter into relations with several princes, and was for a long time protected by Prince Charles of Hesse; then, following various misadventures, he ended up emigrating with fifty disciples to America, where descendants of this group still existed a few years ago. – Mr. van Rijn berk's conclusion seems to call for a reservation: we think quite like him that men such as Willermoz and the Prince of Hesse were serious, sincere and well-intentioned, but, when he urges us to "follow their example", it seems to us that this example should rather serve above all as a lesson to avoid making the same mistakes as them and to avoid being led astray from the right initiatory path and authentic esotericism to embark on the pursuit of vain fantasies.

June 1950

- **Giuseppe Palomba – *Introduction to Economics***

(Pellerano Del Gandio, Napoli).

The content of this work is a reproduction of a course taught at the University of Naples, but which, by the spirit in which it is conceived, differs greatly and fortunately from what university courses in general, and political economy courses in particular, usually are. This is evident from the very first page, as the book bears as its epigraph this quotation from our contributor F. Schuon: "Ultimately, then, there are only two possibilities:
integral, spiritual civilization, involving abuses and superstitions, and fragmentary, materialistic, progressive civilization, involving certain earthly advantages, but excluding what constitutes the sufficient reason and ultimate end of all civilization.
History is there to prove that there is no other choice. The rest is rhetoric and fantasy." The author first set out to give, or rather restore to "economics" a legitimate meaning, by showing that the Greek words from which this term is composed originally had, in addition to the somewhat material meaning that is the only one attributed to them today, a completely different meaning, of a properly spiritual order, referring to the very principles of which this science should normally be an application in the social sphere; this is also true of the word "politics" itself, because of the ancient and traditional conception of the "city" (and this reminds us of considerations of the same kind).

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(as presented by A.K. Coomaraswamy in * *What is Civilization**). He outlines what a truly traditional economy should be, using the medieval guild system as an example; and, in this regard, he particularly emphasizes two characteristics that must necessarily be found in any traditional type of society: "a religious sense of life and being, and a sense of hierarchy based exclusively on spiritual values." He then explains the circumstances under which medieval economic conceptions were abandoned, and the successive phases through which their replacements passed, from the Renaissance to the present day: first "mercantilism," then "capitalism," with an increasingly exclusive predominance of the "materialist" and "quantitative" perspective; the so-called "bourgeois" economy, as the author duly points out, provides abundant illustrations of what we have discussed in * *The Reign of Quantity**. All of this contains numerous considerations of the greatest interest, which we are unfortunately unable to examine in detail here. Indeed, the first chapters are the most important from our point of view, as the subsequent sections are necessarily much more technical in nature, and we are not qualified to assess them. However, we can at least see that, throughout all these developments, the guiding principles laid out at the beginning are never lost sight of. We warmly congratulate Professor Palomba on the courage he demonstrates in reacting in this way, within the academic sphere, against modern and officially accepted ideas, and we can only recommend his book to all those interested in these matters and who know Italian, as they will greatly benefit from it.

September 1950

- **Henri-Félix Marcy – *Essay on the origin of Freemasonry and the history of the Grand Orient of France. Volume I. From the origins to the founding of the Grand Orient of France***

(Editions du Foyer Philosophique, Paris).

This work is very conscientiously done, but solely according to the methods of secular history, which, especially in such cases, cannot yield entirely satisfactory results, if only because of the almost complete absence of written documents. The author's mindset is clearly very "rationalist" and strongly reflects his university education; consequently, many things escape him, especially concerning the initiatory aspect of the question, and this is undoubtedly why the link between operative Freemasonry and the

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* [Reviews of journal articles, December 1947.]

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Speculative Freemasonry appears to him as very "cowardly", as he says at the beginning. However, the rest of his argument hardly justifies this assertion, for at least he is not among those who deny, against all evidence, the existence of a direct link between the two, even if he fails to recognize the importance of the very real, we might even say essential, connection constituted by symbolism. These reservations aside, it must be acknowledged that this work, within the limits of its perspective, provides a great deal of interesting information, particularly in the chapter devoted to the history of architecture in the Middle Ages, and more specifically from the 13th to the 15th centuries. A curious point to note is that French "master builders" appear to have played a leading role in the construction of the great cathedrals of other countries, from which the author believes he can conclude that operative masonry must have originated in France. This is certainly only a hypothesis, but he finds confirmation of it in the similarity between the organization of the German *Hütten* and that of the English and Scottish *Lodges ,* even though it is unlikely that they had any direct contact with each other. There may be some exaggeration here due to an overly "national" perspective, but it remains true that the "legendary" account contained in certain English manuscripts of the *Old Charges* would itself seem to suggest something of this kind, while also placing it in a period considerably earlier than that of the "Gothic" cathedrals; we will only add that, even if we accept that operative Freemasonry was imported from France to England and Germany, this does not prejudge its very origin, since, according to the same "legends," it first came to France from the East, where it was apparently introduced by Byzantine architects. On the other hand, in this regard, one could raise an important question that the author does not consider, and which, moreover, no Masonic historian seems to have sought to elucidate: this question is that of the possible "survival" of operative Freemasonry, in France itself, until around the end of the 17th century.

century or the beginning of the 18th ; indeed, in the presence of certain peculiarities by which French rituals differ from English speculative rituals, and which can manifestly only come from a "source" prior to 1717, one may wonder whether they have a direct operative origin or whether, as some believe, they are due to a Scottish importation which took place in the last years of the 17th century; both hypotheses are plausible, and, in fact, there is an enigma here which has never been solved.

The following chapter begins by outlining, perhaps somewhat summarily, what is known of the history of operative Freemasonry in Scotland and England, where at least its traces do not disappear at the end of the Middle Ages as they did on the continent; indeed, it seems that it remained more "alive" in Scotland than anywhere else until the very end. It then explains how the preponderance acquired by "accepted" Masons, at least in certain Lodges, led to the establishment of speculative Freemasonry when four London Lodges met in 1717 to form the Grand Lodge of England, alongside which the Scottish Lodges continued to exist, as well as, in England itself, those that were dependent on the old York Lodge. Here, the author deserves particular praise for not having been misled by the

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the way in which the destruction, in 1720, of the documents that had been collected over the preceding years is usually presented; he notes that Anderson "avoids giving details about the destroyed manuscripts" and that "his explanation of the causes of the destruction is obscure"; without him saying it quite explicitly, it is clear that he thinks that Anderson himself, along with his "associates" Payne and Desaguliers, must have been involved in this "act of vandalism," to use Thory's expression. It is quite clear indeed, as he then shows, that the founders of Speculative Freemasonry aimed, in acting in this way, not to prevent "these papers from falling into foreign hands," as has been rather naively claimed, but to eliminate everything that could provide proof of the changes they had made to the old Constitutions; Moreover, they did not entirely succeed, since we currently know of about a hundred manuscripts which they had not been able to get their hands on and which escaped destruction.

To return to Anderson, a newspaper, in announcing his death in 1739, described him as a "very facetious fellow," which can be justified by the suspicious role he played in the speculative schism and by the fraudulent way in which he presented his drafting of the new Constitutions as conforming to documents "extracted from the old archives"; AE Waite wrote of him that "he was especially very adept at spoiling everything he touched"; but is it known that, following these events, some operative Lodges went so far as to decide to no longer admit any person bearing the name of Anderson? When one considers that this is the man whose authority so many current Freemasons are fond of constantly invoking, considering him almost as the true founder of Freemasonry, or at least taking all the articles of his Constitutions as authentic *landmarks ,* one cannot help but find that this is not without a certain irony… If the author has shown himself to be more clear-sighted than many others on this question of Andersonian falsification, it is regrettable that he has not been as clear-sighted concerning the origin of the Master Mason degree, which he believes, according to the commonly held opinion, to be only an innovation introduced between 1723 and 1738; but no doubt one cannot demand too great a competence from a pure historian for everything that directly relates to ritual and symbolism.

The final chapter contains the history of French Freemasonry stemming from the Grand Lodge of England, from its first appearance around 1725 or 1726 until the death of the Count of Clermont in 1771. Naturally, the early period is the most obscure, and in this respect, we find here an excellent clarification of the much-debated question of the first Grand Masters. Since the astronomer Lalande published his "Historical Memoir" in 1773, this question had been so muddled that it seemed insoluble; but the succession now appears to be definitively established, except that perhaps another name should be added to the top of the list: that of the Duke of Wharton, who seems to have served, sometime between 1730 and 1735, on behalf of the Grand Lodge of England, of which he had previously been Grand Master, as Provincial Grand Master for France. It's a shame the author didn't continue the story.

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What circumstances led the Grand Orient, in 1910, to remove the first two names that had appeared until then on its list of Grand Masters, when a simple correction would have sufficed? What is rather amusing is that this removal had no other cause than the pamphlets of an occultist adversary, quite erudite otherwise, but who excelled above all at "faking" historical documents to make them say whatever he wanted. We saw this affair quite closely, and, despite the time that has passed, we had good reason never to forget it, having ourselves, at that time, had the privilege of being the target of the same person's hostility! As for the rest of the history of Freemasonry, the importance attributed to Ramsay's famous speech is perhaps excessive, and in any case, it is certainly inaccurate to say that it "expounds the doctrine of Freemasonry." In reality, it only expresses the particular conception held by its author, about whom, incidentally, some very curious biographical details are given. What is true is only that this discourse subsequently exerted an undeniable influence on the formation of the higher degrees, but, of course, and despite the fanciful legends circulating in certain circles, Ramsay himself and Fénelon had nothing to do with it. Regarding the higher degrees, we must say that, despite the clarifications given on a few points, which mainly concern dates, their history, which is only very briefly sketched, remains quite confused overall; moreover, it is truly extremely complicated, and it is very possible that we will never succeed in clarifying it completely. Besides, when we know that the first known mention of a particular degree is found in a document dated a certain year, are we really much further along in understanding its true origins? We will not dwell on the other, much more widely known points, such as the harassment that Freemasons repeatedly suffered at the hands of government authorities, the refusal in France to heed the condemnations issued by Rome—condemnations which the clergy themselves treated as nonexistent—or the schism provoked within the Grand Lodge by the appointment of Lacorne as special deputy to the Count of Clermont, which brings us to the end of the period studied in this first volume. It is hoped that the second part of this work, which will contain the history of the Grand Orient, will make a further significant contribution to the study of these questions, which have often been treated in a biased manner, in one direction or another, and sometimes also with excessive imagination.

October-November 1950

- **Robert Amadou – *Occultism, Sketch of a Living World***

(R. Julliard, Paris).

The author, instead of reserving, as he should, the name "occultism" for the specifically modern conceptions for which it was invented, extends it

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unduly, based on a few apparent similarities, he lumps together things that are in reality quite different and even contradictory. He thus conflates under a single term the various forms of authentic traditional esotericism and their numerous deviations and counterfeits, citing both indiscriminately and placing everything on the same level, not to mention the so-called "occult" sciences, divination arts, and other such things. One can easily imagine all the contradictions and ambiguities that result from such a mixture, in which the best and the worst are inextricably intertwined; the author doesn't even seem to realize that he sometimes cites with approval writings that are in direct opposition to his own theses: thus, he goes so far as to mention us in

applying the label "occultist," which is truly the height of absurdity! As if this flaw weren't enough, there's also a serious error in perspective in the way all these things are considered, for they are presented as simply constituting a "philosophy"; but if they are traditional doctrines, they are obviously of a completely different order, and if they are merely counterfeits of them, they are still something else entirely, which in any case cannot be contained within the framework of philosophical thought. We confess that we haven't quite understood what is meant by a "living world," unless it's a way of distinguishing the conception being presented from that which emerges from ordinary science and which would undoubtedly then be considered that of a "dead world"; we do, in fact, remember having heard similar language used by certain occultists in the past; But what can expressions like the frequently recurring "occult world" and even "occult phenomena" possibly mean? It's not to say that there aren't some interesting insights on specific points among all this; but the whole thing, let's be clear, is a real mess, and we pity the unfortunate readers who won't have access to other, better-"clarified" and more reliable sources of information on all the issues addressed; such a book can only contribute to increasing the intellectual disorder of our time, of which it is itself an excellent example.

• Robert Amadou and Robert Kanters – *Literary Anthology of occultism*

(R. Julliard, Paris).

The most striking feature, at first glance, of this collection devoted to "occultism" is that it does not include a single name of an occultist writer (unless Péladan is considered as such, which may be true to a certain extent); the explanation for this bizarre fact lies partly in the confusion we noted in the previous work and which is expressed again in the introduction to this one. However, we say only partly, because there is something else: the authors intended to create a "literary" anthology.

According to their perspective, this means that, for a text to be worthy of reproduction, its form of expression must be "beautiful"; it therefore seems that, among occultists in the proper sense of the word, they have not found any who satisfy this requirement.

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criterion. To be honest, we don't quite see what kind of "beauty" there could be in some of the passages cited, such as Huysmans' rather repugnant description of a Black Mass (based, as we know, on information provided by the infamous Abbé Boullan), or, from another point of view, the detailed account of an administrative organization, even an imaginary one, like that of Ballanche's "City of Atonement"; but obviously, like everything that falls under the umbrella of "literature," this is merely a matter of individual taste and "subjective" appreciation; as for the claim to treat writers of antiquity and the Middle Ages "literarily," this must naturally be seen as one of the usual effects of the distorting lens of modern "aesthetics." There is also a second criterion, which is, we are assured, "traditional conformity"; On this point, we have serious doubts about the authors' competence, and we wonder above all what will become of them in the "philosophical" anthology they announce. In any case, the texts themselves at least retain their intrinsic value, whatever reservations one might have about the spirit that guided their grouping: the collection is, moreover, quite curious in certain respects, and it is truly significant that a collection which begins with Hesiod, Pythagoras, and Plato ends with André Breton!

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Published in the *Philosophical Review*

May-June 1919

- **John Laird. – *Problems of the self***

(1 vol. in-8° of 375 pages, London, Macmillan, 1917).

This work is the development of a series of lectures given in March 1914 at the University of Edinburgh.

The author sets out to demonstrate the inadequacy of "psychology without the soul," that is, of a phenomenalist conception of psychology; but he does not limit himself to this negative viewpoint, and he also wants to indicate what "psychology with the soul" is: why must we admit a soul, and in what precise sense should we understand it? Mr. Laird uses the word "self" (difficult to translate into French, and which can hardly be rendered except by "the self") in preference to other terms such as "person," "soul," "spirit," etc., because it seems to him broader and less determined, and, consequently, less likely to prejudge a certain solution to the problems in question.

Mr. Laird begins by highlighting the paramount importance of these problems for humankind, an importance which, in his view, should make them, in a sense, the center and keystone of all philosophy. Then, seeking how to approach these questions, to which he does not, moreover, claim to provide a definitive answer, he finds that the best starting point lies in the analysis of what he calls "experiences," by which he means what are more commonly called "states of consciousness," "mental processes," and so on. This analysis is precisely the object of psychology; but here we must go further, for the problems of the "self" and its nature clearly transcend the domain of psychological investigation. Does this mean that the study undertaken here falls within the realm of metaphysics, or does it simply strive to lead to it? In any case, the author, at the beginning, refrains from specifying whether the point of view he will adopt is metaphysical or psychological.

In any case, Mr. Laird, to begin with, tries to define the object of psychology; he shows that it is insufficient to oppose the psychic to the physical, because everything that does not belong to the physical world is not, necessarily and by that very fact, of a psychic nature. "Experiences" cannot be defined by anything else; psychological analysis, which seeks to understand their nature, is either direct or indirect. Indirect analysis can be

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called "interpretive," it is based on the study of languages, institutions, etc.; as for direct analysis, it is nothing other than introspection. Hence a discussion on the possibility of introspection and the value of the results it allows us to obtain. Introspection shows that the common characteristic of all "experiences" is that they are not objects for consciousness, at least not initially, but modes of relating to an object; and this is true for feeling as well, though less obviously, as for knowledge and will. This usual division of "experiences" into three classes has a logical basis, which is as follows: knowledge is "adynamic," because it does not seek to change its object and is not affected by it; the other two classes are "dynamic," but in different ways: feeling is essentially passive, being the way in which the subject is consciously affected by the object; The will, on the contrary, is the conscious action or reaction of the subject toward the object. These various kinds of "experiences," despite their distinction, are not isolated; they are always linked and united at every moment of psychic life. What, then, is the principle of their unity? Moreover, each moment is also linked to those that preceded it and those that will follow it. How can this continuity be explained? Thus arises the question of the "self" or the soul; but before addressing it definitively, a number of preliminary problems must still be dealt with.

The first of these problems is that of the relationship of the "self" with the body. The essence of the self is to be conscious, and consciousness is not an object, but an act involving a relationship to an object. What leads to confusing the body with the self, or at least to viewing it as part of the self, is primarily the difficulty of distinguishing data from the "inner sense" (understood literally, as relating to the sensations of the internal organs) from certain purely psychic elements, mainly of an affective nature. Of course, the distinction established between the body and the self does not deny that the body is "ours," but only that it is "ourselves."

Next, the author critiques various theories that posit the "self" as essentially comprised of one particular class of "experiences," such as feelings, will, or intelligence. Several chapters are devoted to this discussion, which is based on a psychological analysis that we cannot follow here, as it would require going into detail to highlight its significance.
Although this discussion is undertaken and conducted with a view to conclusions that may be extra-psychological, it is nonetheless, in itself, purely psychological, with the exception of a few points considered more or less incidentally, such as the question of finality (psychic and biological), regarding which the arguments of neo-vitalism are examined. We will also mention, in this section, the chapter relating to the "primacy of practical reason"; but do we really have the right to call metaphysical, as Mr. Laird does, the theories of Kant and his "voluntarist" successors in this respect, or even that of Mr. Bergson (whose position is, moreover, notably different)?

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The most characteristic features of the "self," as we have already seen, are unity and continuity, which constitute what we might call "personal identity." The author therefore endeavors to demonstrate the real existence of this unity and continuity in "experiences" as they are known to us through introspection, and by considering, once again, intelligence, feeling, and will in turn. However, since there would be a danger in exaggerating this unity, its limitations must also be highlighted; the only point that matters is that a certain unity is found in all elements of mental life.

How is this unity possible? Since the continuity of the "self"
This implies the preservation of the past; what are the conditions for this preservation?
Leaving aside for the moment the explanation of a substantial soul, distinct from the phenomenal "self," there are two main theories to consider. The first is physiological, and views conservation as simply a function of the brain. The second is psychological, and asserts that the continuity of the "self"

depends on the persistence of psychic dispositions; moreover, this theory is only intelligible if one admits the existence of the subconscious. The author insists on the hypothetical nature of these two explanations, especially the first, and on the impossibility of proving their sufficientness. The existence of subconscious elements, and their presence in all our "experiences," do not seem contestable, but the question is whether they fully account for the unity of conscious life; this is possible, but by no means demonstrated, and, consequently, the wisest course is to suspend our judgment. In any case, it has not been

found so far no conclusive arguments in favor of "psychology without the soul".

Mr. Laird then explores what the examination of certain abnormal cases, such as that of "multiple personalities," can shed light on the problems of the "self." Facts of this kind constitute the best test for the truth of a theory of the "self," because they allow for the application of the "difference method": for one to speak of a dissociation of personality, the personality must be altered in its most essential aspects, and even if there is no actual dissociation in the strict sense, it is worthwhile to ask what creates the illusion of it. It is necessary to see not only whether there is a dissociation of a personality, but also whether there is a dissociation into new personalities, that is to say, whether each of the states that then occur exhibits the characteristics of the "self"; yet another question is whether a plurality of personalities can exist in the same body simultaneously, or only successively. The study of the facts leads to this conclusion: if we assert that the "self" must possess a high degree of unity and continuity, we must admit that multiple personalities can indeed exist; if, on the contrary, we merely grant the "self" a relative unity, abnormal cases appear only as an exaggeration of the changes that occur in ordinary life. Moreover, taking these changes into account, the first hypothesis should logically lead us to believe that multiple personalities are the rule and not the exception, since we are truly different at different stages of our lives; however, the changes are not as sudden in normal cases as in abnormal ones. This consequence, quite

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This is difficult to accept and shows that we must be careful not to conceive of the unity of the "self". as being necessarily an absolute unit, and that it is better to think that it may be less than is ordinarily supposed.

The concept of the "self" as substance is addressed, from a historical perspective, through a study of the discussions it has generated in modern philosophy. The author primarily presents, on this subject, the doctrine of Descartes, who maintains the substantiality of the soul, but affirms it more than he proves it; that of Hume, who denies it; and that of Locke, for whom it is irrelevant whether or not the soul is considered a substance. He also includes an overview of the opinions of Kant and Hegel. He believes that the empiricists are correct in their criticism of certain conceptions of substance, one of which is that which regards it as an idea among other ideas, or as a thing among other things, and another of which separates qualities from substance in such a way that the qualities themselves tend to be regarded as substances.

But there is another possibility: why shouldn't substance simply be an expression of the necessity of the union of qualities? Everything that exists has multiple qualities; it may have no other content than these, but it is not solely for that reason an aggregate of these qualities; the qualities must be united, and this necessity may be the very principle of substance. We would thus escape Hume's outright negation, while dismissing, at least as unnecessary, the "transcendent" conception of substance; this allows us to foresee what the conclusion will be.

If there is a soul, it must be a substance, immaterial and existing in time; otherwise, it is no longer a soul, but something else. If the soul is a substance, is it a permanent or indivisible substance, and in what sense is it superior to matter? To say that the soul is immaterial, is that not to characterize it in a purely negative way? If we say that it is in time, must we consider time as absolutely real? Finally, and above all, what is the relationship of the soul to the succession of "experiences" that constitutes the empirical "self"? To answer all these questions, we must begin by asking ourselves what substance is, and we can, for this, first examine the two definitions given by Descartes: according to the first, substance is *res per se subsistens ;* according to the second, it is "the support of accidents." Mr. Laird maintains that these two definitions are not equivalent, that modes or qualities must be an integral part of the notion of a substance, and that this notion is distinct from the logical notion of the subject, even if the latter is restricted to the consideration of subjects that can never become predicates. Consequently, he declares a purely logical definition of substance impossible; for him, substance implies not only objectivity or reality understood in its broadest sense, but existence, which is known subjectively through the senses, and which, objectively, resides in the "particular." In this latter term, we must understand all the qualities of a thing, both those that are special to it and differentiate it from other things and those that it shares with others; and, moreover, since qualities are universal (we would rather say general), there must be a matter or ÿÿÿ that plays the role

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of the principle of individuation. This matter or substratum is not a distinct particular thing, but an element of every particular thing, an element which precisely makes this thing particular, and makes it so in an irreducible way.
We thus return to a conception that, on the surface, resembles the Aristotelian conception: every substance is composed of matter and form; however, we must not forget that substance here is only the specific unity of the qualities of a particular thing. What, then, is the kind of unity we attribute to these things, and to what extent do we believe in the identity of a thing, when it nevertheless undergoes changes in some of its constituent parts?
In fact, a thing, under these conditions, may or may not be said to be the same, depending on the degree of unity we intend to express by that. If the change is continuous, one can always find in its course a state that is identical to one of the extremes, a certain degree of identity being given, while another, more distant state will no longer be so; it will therefore be necessary to say that, in the interval, there has been a passage from one substance to another. This conception finds its application in the problem of the substantiality of organisms: an organism is or is not one and distinct, depending on how this unity and this distinction are defined. The same applies to the substantiality of the "self": as long as there is a characteristic unity of "experiences," there exists a particular soul, of which these "experiences" are, in a sense, the matter. The soul is the unity of "experiences"; its substantiality is nothing other than the fact that every given "experience" must be part of such a unity. What this unity is, we must specify for the "self" as well as for other particular things; the minimum of unity and continuity required for us to speak of personal identity can be very small, and, in any case, the unity of the soul throughout the course of its existence is naturally less than its unity at a given moment. In short, we must accept the soul as observation reveals it to us, without believing it to be more permanent or more perfect than it actually is, but without falling into the opposite error either. With this way of considering it, immortality, involving the preservation of personal identity, nevertheless remains possible: if the soul is different from the body, it can survive it, unless it is proven that the body is necessary for its existence; and, if the soul can survive the body, it can be immortal in the strictest sense, that is to say, indestructible. But, apart from a supernatural revelation, that's all that can be said on this matter.

What seems to us to be of most interest in the work whose outlines we have just indicated are the analyses and discussions that form its purely psychological section, of which we have unfortunately only been able to give a very incomplete idea; but it is regrettable that these discussions almost never lead to a clear conclusion. If it were only a matter of psychology, this might not be of great importance; it would not even be a flaw in itself, since it would be unavoidable on many points. However, the author's intention is clearly something else: this entire psychological section is merely a kind of introduction, quite extensive since it occupies more than half the book, to considerations which, for him, must have a metaphysical scope; but do they truly? Mr. Laird seems to have sought, perhaps

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unintentionally, he establishes a kind of compromise between substantialism and phenomenalism; while declaring himself opposed to the latter doctrine, he develops a conception of substance such that even a phenomenalist could accept most of its consequences without much difficulty; in particular, is the possibility of immortality to which it leads really different from that which Renouvier introduced in his "personalism"? On this question of substance, we cannot enter into a thorough discussion, which would far exceed the limits of a review; however, allow us to point out how questionable is the radical distinction that Mr. Laird wants to establish between the notion of substance and that of the logical subject. If he had considered the question as it appears in ancient philosophy, instead of limiting himself to modern philosophy, he would have seen that the primary meaning of the notion of substance, particularly in Aristotle, is nothing other than the logical subject; Moreover, in modern philosophy itself, he could have found an identical position in Leibniz, about whom we are surprised that he says nothing. The meaning that Mr. Laird intends to attach exclusively to substance is entirely secondary and derivative: of the two definitions of Descartes, the one he gives as the first is in reality only a consequence of the second, for it is the subject that is *res per se subsistens,* or, to speak like Spinoza, "that which is in itself and by itself," qualities being able to have existence only in and through the subject. Certainly, everyone may have the right to call substance whatever they please; but, if it is only a matter of preserving a word, is it really worth the trouble? And, if a new notion is found to replace that of substance, would it not be preferable to indicate it frankly, without false modesty, by designating it with a new term?

One of the undeniable merits of a work like this is to show that psychology, like all other sciences, poses questions that transcend it and that it is incapable of resolving. But precisely because these questions have no psychological solution, how can we hope to answer them by relying on introspection and the analysis of mental phenomena? In this respect, psychology is in exactly the same situation as the other factual sciences. We should not allow the impression, as many are all too inclined to do, that it has more or a closer connection with metaphysics than the others. Starting from observation, we can formulate scientific laws, but nothing more, and when faced with questions like those we are discussing here, we can only acknowledge the relativity of science and its limitations. As for the metaphysical realm, it can never be reached in this way, because it constitutes an order of knowledge essentially and profoundly different from the scientific realm; and in any case, even if one tries to connect the two, the factual sciences certainly will not provide the means. One can, by adopting any point of view whatsoever, and even without defining that point of view, make all sorts of hypotheses on a given question, but this is not, for us, true metaphysics. For there to be metaphysics, it is not enough that the questions considered be metaphysical in nature; they must also be treated metaphysically, and this is not the case here. The psychologist who reads this book will be able to

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to derive the greatest benefit from it, but the metaphysician who would rely on the promises of the title will experience some disappointment.

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flight. XVIII, 1917-1918. London, Williams and Norgate, 1918; vol. In-8°, 655 pages.

o **H. Wildon Carr –** The interaction ***of mind and body*** (reciprocal of mind and body)

The major difficulty in resolving the question addressed here stems from the impossibility of conceiving a causal chain between psychic and physical phenomena; it is to escape this that some have taken refuge in "parallelist" theories. However, the reciprocal action of mind and body is not a theoretical concept, but a fact that must be explained. The two elements involved are heterogeneous, yet nonetheless interdependent; however, this interdependent relationship must be conceived as distinct from both causality and parallelism. Causality would imply a single series into which both mental and bodily events must enter; parallelism, on the other hand, would imply two completely independent series, although corresponding to each other point by point. Interdependentness is the cooperation of two distinct systems, each of which is an individual organization with its own unique nature. There is a continual adaptation of mind and body, but in such a way that the entire mental system acts upon the entire bodily system, or vice versa, and not a part of one upon a part of the other. The principles of the two systems are antithetical, because life is both activity and duration: the body is the concrete realization of activity, the mind that of duration; the opposition they represent is, from another point of view, that of necessity and freedom. The reciprocal action of mind and body is not the unification of an original diversity: on the contrary, it expresses a "dichotomous" differentiation, inherent and necessary to the process of the realization of vital action.

The theory outlined in this study certainly raises more than one difficulty; in particular, it presupposes a conception of "mental structure" and a definition of life that one may well find debatable. However, as it stands, it appears to us far preferable to parallelism, if only in that it considers the human being as a composite, instead of separating it into two parts between which there can be no real relationship, as has been the unfortunate habit since Descartes; and this, in our opinion, is an immense advantage.

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o **Karin Stephen –** ***Thought and*** intuition

If we examine our means of knowledge, we must distinguish between direct experience and thought, which provides us with additional knowledge about that experience. This thought, the faculty of conceiving and reasoning, is, according to Bergson, merely a "last resort," imposed by the limitations of our perceptual capacity. In speaking thus, Bergson shows that he is concerned solely with "existence" and the means of increasing our knowledge of it: this, for him, is the problem that philosophy must address, to the exclusion of all that is pure thought and pure science. The work of thought, which always strives to move from particular experience to general law, would be carried out at the expense of experience itself, which it would fragment and distort.

Experience, instead of expanding, would become limited by intellectualizing: we would retain only what is relevant to our action upon things, and neglect everything else; and the same limiting action would apply to memory as well as to present perception. What Bergson criticizes in our "classified" experience is not its difference in content from primitive experience, for the addition of memory could only enrich it; it is its difference in form, its division into distinct things, possessing certain qualities in common. The new method of philosophy must therefore consist in returning to perception itself, and this through intuition, which is not a special faculty, but rather the mental act that combines the past and the present to form experience. It is on this intuition that, moreover, not only our experience, but also all our knowledge about it, originally rests. This knowledge, with the process of abstraction it entails, then acts upon our experience to such an extent that we can only perceive reality through symbols, so that we impose upon experience itself a form that belongs only to the symbols employed by thought. What Bergson demands, therefore, is that the experience which serves as the starting point for philosophy be as complete and immediate as experience can be.

This represents an interesting effort to clarify and define the meaning of Bergsonian intuition and how its relationship to thought or intelligence should be considered. However, with a philosophy of this nature, isn't there always a risk that the more one tries to define it precisely, the more one risks distorting it by intellectualizing it?

o **FC Bartlett –** ***The Development*** of Criticism

In the psychological development of criticism, several successive stages must be distinguished: simple appreciation, conventional criticism, and rational criticism. The influence of feeling is predominant at the beginning, but analysis and reflection subsequently allow for the establishment of general laws and guiding principles that lead to rational criticism, free from the influence of...

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immediate determination by feeling. We must also consider another type of criticism, which we can call intuitive, and in which the judgment appears as the result of a certain characteristic of the object which escapes analysis, as well as of the relationship which exists between the object and the person who makes the evaluative judgment about it.

o **GE Moore –** The conception ***of reality*** reality)

This is a discussion of a contradiction, at least an apparent one, found in Mr. Bradley's work entitled **Appearance and Reality*,* where it is stated, on the one hand, that time is an appearance, that it "has no reality" or "does not belong to reality," and, on the other hand, that appearances, as such, "are facts," that they "are" or "exist." To resolve this contradiction, must we admit a distinction between "existence" and "reality," and, if so, in what sense should we understand "reality"? If Mr. Bradley understands it in the usual sense, he cannot escape the contradiction; but if he has not noticed it, this is undoubtedly because, for him, the mere act of thinking about something is sufficient for that thing to exist, without, however, thereby making it real. Mr. Moore disagrees, although he admits he doesn't fully grasp what the thought of a nonexistent thing might be: on the other hand, he tries to show that reality, in the ordinary sense, is not a concept in the strict sense. A discussion like this would prove once again, if proof were still needed, that philosophers would be most benefited from clarifying, first and foremost, the meaning they intend to attribute to the terms they use.

o **JA Smith –** ***Is there a mathematics of intensity?*** (Is there (A mathematics of intensity?)

The question addressed in this study falls under what Kant calls "transcendental logic"; it therefore concerns the foundations of the sciences. Kant used the expression *mathesis intensorum* to designate a certain kind of synthetic *a priori* knowledge of nature, which presupposes that there is a mathematical knowledge, possible or actual, of objects that are *intense.* It is therefore necessary to see whether the mathematical method is truly applicable to the study of intensity. If one seeks an intrinsic characteristic that distinguishes mathematics from any other science, one finds that its method consists essentially in enumeration, to which one might, strictly speaking, add measurement. Now, intensive quantities are neither countable multitudes nor measurable magnitudes, although they present certain analogies with both. The conclusion, therefore, seems to be that, for such quantities, mathematical or exact knowledge is impossible; there are things whose nature admits only "inexact" knowledge, without such "inaccuracy" being considered a defect.

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We will allow ourselves one objection here: if intensity is truly a quantity, it is strange that its study eludes the mathematical method; and, as far as physical *intensities* are concerned (density, temperature, illumination, etc.), their quantitative nature can hardly be doubted. However, one can also speak of intensity in a completely different sense, and this is sometimes done in psychology, for sensations, for example; it is such cases that Mr. Smith seems to have had in mind above all, and his mistake is to believe that one can still speak of quantity there. For us too, there are things to which mathematics is not applicable, but these are those that do not fall into the category of quantity.

o **FW Thomas – *Indian*** ideas of action and their interest for modern thinking

According to the Indian doctrine of *karma* or action, the present state of a being is determined as a result of its antecedent actions, and every action produces a *samskara,* a latent impression or disposition that will likewise be a condition of a subsequent state. This causal chain is regarded as a cosmic law, and the concept is generally extended to inanimate nature. Mr. Thomas first seeks to demonstrate the analogy of this view with certain modern theories, especially biological ones, such as that of Semon; he even goes so far as to equate the latter's "mneme" with *karma,* and his "engrams" with *samskaras.* He then examines the grammatical and logical theories of action among the Indians, emphasizing the different meanings of verbal notions, which seem to fall into the categories of "existence," "fulfillment," and "change." He then seeks to clarify the concept of the category of action, comparing Aristotle's doctrine on this point with previous ones. Discussing the question of whether all action should be considered momentary, he arrives at the following classification: 1) actions, momentary or total, and repetitions thereof; 2) efforts and resistances, momentary or continuous; 3) changes, momentary or compound; 4) continuous evolution or transformation. The study of action (including mental action) from the point of view of duration seems to give rise to three concepts: instantaneity, continuity, and totality; however, the temporal nature of action appears to consist not in its occupying a certain duration, but rather in its occurring at a certain moment. As for the conception of action in physics, motion can be an action, if not of the thing itself that moves, at least of the entire system in which that thing is included; but the author only indicates this latter order of considerations.

Many points in this work would give rise to an interesting discussion, but one that we cannot undertake here. We will therefore limit ourselves to a remark of quite general scope: namely, that Mr. Thomas may not have sufficiently guarded against the danger of drawing Indian and modern European ideas closer together than the nature of either legitimately allows. The difference that exists between the modes of Eastern thought and those of

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Western thought is, for us, so profound and so irreducible that the same word, philosophy or any other, cannot serve to designate them equally. Similarities such as those pointed out by Mr. Thomas seem to us much more superficial than he believes, because the viewpoints represented by the conceptions he compares are by no means the same on both sides; a metaphysical doctrine (moreover, in no way moral or religious in our view) and a biological theory cannot, to any degree, carry the same meaning.

C.F. **D'Arcy – *The*** Theory of a Limited Deity

This is a critical examination of certain recent theories, particularly that of William James. Those who have put forward similar ideas have done so, for the most part, because they believed the existence of evil to be incompatible with the doctrine of an all-powerful God. Dr. D' Arcy begins by outlining the historical evolution of religious conceptions, which he argues have passed successively through the animistic, polytheistic, and monotheistic phases. This evolution continues to this day; but must it lead to a doctrine such as that of a limited God? The author believes that such a doctrine is far less logical than polytheism, to which it seems to resemble in some respects: moreover, the arguments that James seeks to derive from "religious experience" and the study of certain psychic phenomena do not actually prove anything in his favor. Historical development has always been in elevating the idea of God, not in degrading it. The conclusion will therefore be in favor of a conception of God who is both personal and "super-personal".

It is certain that moral concerns predominate in James and in many other contemporary thinkers. When Dr. D' Arcy says that we now attach more importance to God's goodness than to his wisdom or power, he may be wrong to overgeneralize; but it is nonetheless true that the tendency of certain religious forms to degenerate into "moralism" is a fact that would be interesting to study as such. However, the confusion of the moral point of view with the metaphysical point of view is not the sole source of conceptions of a limited Deity: in Renouvier, for example, who is not discussed in this study, it is quite different: "finitists" of this type, having argued very rightly against the supposed mathematical infinity, believe they have thereby ruined the idea of metaphysical infinity, thus demonstrating their ignorance of its true nature. In any case, it seems that, in all instances, there is always an underlying confusion; and, on the other hand, we agree with Dr. D' Arcy when he believes that polytheism should be the logical outcome of such conceptions. We should add that the idea of a limited Deity is always that of a particular being, and that the existence of such beings is merely a question of fact, without any relation to the problems that may arise concerning metaphysical principles. Finally, as for Dr. D' Arcy's conclusion, the sense in which he intends the theological terms to be understood is nothing other than what philosophy

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Scholasticism calls it the "analogical sense," and the conception it indicates at the end is only a partial sketch of what was fully developed by some of the oldest doctrines of the East: a curious encounter for a proponent of the "progressive" evolution of religious ideas!

o **JB Baillie – *Anthropomorphism and*** Truth

There are two opposing and irreconcilable ways of conceiving truth: for some, it is independent of the mind and imposes itself upon it; for others, it is, on the contrary, subordinate to it and is merely an instrument for the realization of its practical interests. Both seem to forget, on the one hand, that the individual mind is never fully developed, and, on the other hand, that the reality of indivisible individuality lies behind both the processes of practical action and those of intellectual activity. All the functions of the individual mind, intellectual or otherwise, must be regarded as means of fulfilling its own kind of existence, each function being, moreover, only a certain specialized activity of the whole mind. Human life, in particular, is a conscious arrangement of the world from a specifically human point of view, and this is what the author means by "anthropomorphism." This conception is developed here only with regard to scientific knowledge; But it is perhaps not on this ground, whatever Mr. Baillie may think, that a "relativism" of this kind encounters the most serious difficulties.

o **JW Scott – *Realism and*** Politics

Realism, as understood here, is opposed to idealism, not by viewing things as "non-mental", but by viewing them as "unconstructed", that is, by devoting all its efforts to maintaining the "given".
intact. That being said, the author proposes to show that there is realism in Mr. Bergson's doctrine, that it is similar in this respect to that of Mr. Russell, and that this realism is for both the point of contact with the conceptions which are at the basis of certain social movements, such as new socialism or revolutionary syndicalism.

o **FC Schiller – *Omnipotence*** (All-Powerful)

This is a discussion of Dr. D'Arcy 's study , which we reviewed earlier. The author begins by analyzing the problem of "God," that is, by distinguishing the various questions it entails. He then demonstrates that Dr. D'Arcy's arguments against the concept of a limited God are inconclusive, and finally, he attempts to establish that the idea of an all-powerful God has less spiritual and religious "value" than that of a finite God. In this last section, Mr. Schiller's "pragmatist" perspective becomes clear; he also seeks to show that the

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The notion of divine omnipotence has its psychological origin in the need for security, which, in another domain, also gives rise to the notion of "validity".
logic.

It seems to us that there is much confusion in all this: for example, the concept of "God" is presented as one answer, among other equally possible ones, to a certain series of questions; but doesn't this presuppose that it is a single, fixed concept? One of the questions it must answer is the one whose various solutions are represented by monism, dualism, and pluralism; and, for Mr. Schiller, this question concerns reality considered from a "quantitative" perspective, as if the notion of arithmetic unity and that of what is analogously called metaphysical unity were one and the same. On the other hand, moral concerns play a considerable role here: for example, the distinction between good and evil must exist for God as well as for man. Discussions like this arise primarily from poorly formulated questions and the mixing of several radically different points of view. The classical position of the problem of the "existence of God", the very terms of this problem, imply multiple confusions, in the midst of which we will struggle in vain until we begin by determining how they should be the relations of metaphysics with theology, and those of both with science.

o **Arthur Robinson –** ***Behavior as a psychological concept*** (Attitude as a psychological concept)

We only attempt to translate "behaviour" as "attitude" for lack of a better term in French: it is the way in which a living being behaves and reacts to the environment; it is, in short, a more complicated form of reflex action.
Attempts have been made to transfer this concept from the field of biology to that of psychology, hence what is called "behaviorism," which, moreover, presents several forms and degrees: for some, the notion in question is merely a starting point in psychology; for others, it constitutes its entire object and must completely replace the very notion of consciousness. Mr. Robinson criticizes these theories and shows that they simply confuse psychology with physiology, eliminating what constitutes its truly characteristic elements: psychology can only be the study of the conscious organism as such.

o **HJW Hetherington –** ***The conception of*** a unitary social order

The most characteristic feature of recent social philosophy is the critique of state authority and the desire to replace the state's unitary control of social life with a control of interests by the institutions that correspond to them. The state is conceived as hostile to the freedom of individuals and to that of

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All other social groups criticize the state in two ways: some reproach it for its rigid and mechanical nature; others, for its intrusion into areas that do not fall within its natural jurisdiction. For the latter, the state is merely one particular institution among other functional institutions, each of which must be equally sovereign within its own domain. The author seeks to demonstrate that all these criticisms, in opposition to traditional theories, tend to eliminate the concept of "obligation," essential to any rational explanation of social organization.

o **EE Constance Jones – *Practical*** dualism practical)

This is an exposition of how Sidgwick, in his *Methods of Ethics,* views what he calls the "dualism of practical reason": by this he means that human conduct is governed by two equally essential principles, which are "rational benevolence" and "rational self-love." These two principles, which respectively represent altruism and egoism, may seem contradictory; but Miss Jones attempts to show that, in reality, the former implies or includes the latter.

A simple remark: "accepting the morality of common sense, but seeking to give it a philosophical basis" is indeed a characteristic of almost all moral theories; but is it not at the same time proof that these theories are artificial at heart, and that each philosopher seeks only to justify, according to his own ideas, a practice whose existence is perfectly independent of any such construction?

o **G. Dawes Hicks – *The*** “modes” of Spinoza and the “monads” of Leibnitz

The opposition between Spinoza's philosophy, with its single universal Substance, and Leibniz's philosophy, which considers the absolute multiplicity of individual substances fundamental, is often emphasized. However, the author of this study aims to show that the contradiction between the two doctrines is more apparent than real, and that there are indeed many points of convergence between them, both in terms of the results they achieve and the difficulties they raise. His comparative examination focuses successively on the question of the relationship between essence and existence, on the conception of activity as the principle of individuality, on the distinction between the degrees of development of individual beings, and finally on the relationship of finite individuals with God. The interpretations offered are quite interesting, although some may be debatable; we regret that the limitations of this review do not allow us to discuss at least some of them. In his conclusion, the author highlights the interest

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current, and not simply historical, of the questions he considered during his presentation.

Albert **A. Cock – *The ontological*** argument for the existence of God

The ontological argument, as formulated by Saint Anselm, is wrongly presented as implying the addition of existence as a predicate, whereas it is a demonstration of the invalidity of its subtraction. Most of the criticisms leveled against it actually concern the definition of God; and it must be kept in mind that the argument relates exclusively to *id quo nihil majus cogitari potest (that which nothing major can think).* Mr. Cock shows in particular that Kant's criticism is illegitimate, because Kant's very position, limiting human knowledge "to the given, subsumed by us under the forms of space and time," denies him the only ground on which the ontological argument can be validly discussed: there can be nothing in common between the Kantian theory of knowledge and the definition of God in question.

While we largely agree with Mr. Cock on this point, we are less convinced when he says that what makes the argument seem unsatisfactory is its purely intellectual character. On the contrary, we believe that it must be so in order to claim genuine metaphysical significance, but that its greatest flaw (not to mention the ambiguity of the word "existence") lies in its being a faulty transposition of a metaphysical truth into theological terms: proponents and opponents of the argument almost always give us the impression of debating the possibility of applying to "a being" what is true only of "Being."

o **WR Matthews – *The*** moral argument for theism

The set of facts that we bring together under the name of "morality" can be studied from three different points of view: historical, psychological, and properly ethical.
The author, considering these three viewpoints one after the other, sets out to demonstrate, for each of them, the advantages that theism presents over any other theory. This inquiry is pursued with a clear bias toward justifying "the authority of the moral law" and "the objectivity of the moral ideal." We confess that we do not see very clearly how providing such a justification constitutes proof, even incidental, of the truth of a doctrine. There is something here that reminds us of Kant's attitude toward his "postulates," taking for an argument what is merely a sentimental wish. If theism (the definition of which, moreover, needs to be agreed upon) is metaphysical in nature, it must be established independently of any moral consideration; if it then happens to justify morality, so much the better for morality, but metaphysics has no interest in it whatsoever.

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From another point of view, is it really accurate to say, as Mr. Matthews does, that the feeling of obligation is the fundamental characteristic of moral conscience? Some ancient moralities, and in particular that of the Stoics, hardly seem to have known it, and yet it is quite difficult to dispute that these are moralities in the most rigorous sense of the word.

o **S. Alexander –** Space ***-time***

This is an excerpt from a larger work in which the author sets out to examine the relationship between space and time, considered as empirical realities. For him, space and time are interdependent and mutually implicated, such that they constitute, strictly speaking, a single reality: "spacetime." It is time that makes space continuous by ensuring its divisibility; and, likewise, it is also space that makes time continuous by ensuring the connection of its parts. "Spacetime" is a system of "point-instants," that is, lines of movement connecting points or instants to one another. Time is successive, irreversible, and transitive, and these three characteristics correspond to the three dimensions of space; the habit of representing time spatially expresses the intrinsic nature of time itself.

Mr. Alexander consequently proposes a hypothesis according to which things that exist in space and time are merely complexes of "space-time," that is, of motion, and the relation of time to space is analogous to that of mind to body. This is an extremely ingenious theory, but we cannot elaborate further, as we would not wish to venture a judgment on such a cursory and incomplete overview.

o **JS Haldane, D'Arcy W. Thompson, P. Chalmers Mitchell and L. T Hobhouse –** Are physical, biological and psychological categories irreducible ?

The subject of this discussion is whether the "categories" or general conceptions ordinarily used to interpret physical, biological, and psychological phenomena are essentially different and irreconcilable. Mr. Haldane maintains their irreducibility and, consequently, the inadequacy of a mechanistic explanation for vital phenomena. He endeavors to show that the idea of a mechanism constantly maintaining and reproducing its own structure is contradictory. Moreover, even for physical phenomena, the mechanistic hypothesis is not truly explanatory; in using it, we employ simplified, schematic conceptions, convenient for that very reason, and legitimate within certain limits. When we attempt to apply these conceptions to biological and psychological phenomena, the error becomes apparent; it is necessary to

therefore resorting to other concepts, likely to be applicable to another major

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class of phenomena. Similarly, biological conceptions, which are still relatively simplified, cannot, without gross error, be applied to psychological phenomena. In short, these are more or less partial and incomplete interpretations, whose inadequacy is revealed successively with regard to one or another kind of phenomenon.

Leaving aside the question of psychological phenomena, Mr. Thompson defends mechanism, if not as a total explanation of life, at least as an explanation of the details of biological phenomena. He takes up, in order to discuss them, the arguments and examples of Mr. Haldane, whom he also criticizes for not having clearly indicated what constitutes properly biological conceptions. After developing the reasons for his confidence in mechanism, even where it may currently seem insufficient, he clarifies that the sense in which he understands it in no way implies materialism, and does not even exclude a certain teleological point of view; mechanism and finalism are two different paths, but ones that can ultimately converge.

Mr. Mitchell believes in the inadequacy of the mechanism, but he does not draw the same conclusions as Mr. Haldane. For him, the categories of physics and biology, by becoming less and less mechanical, are approaching those of psychology: the tendency of science is towards a synthesis of categories, and observation, perhaps more than thought, allows us to admit the possibility of this synthesis where matter, life and mind would be regarded as different aspects of the same reality.

Mr. Hobhouse begins by defining three types of activity: mechanical, organic, and teleological. He then demonstrates that the second can be reduced to a particular case of the first or third, while the latter remain fundamentally irreducible categories. Now, while some of the activity of living organisms is mechanical, another part clearly appears to have a teleological character. This can be explained if one considers the living being as a "psycho-physical whole," with body and soul not being separate entities, but merely distinct and perhaps incomplete aspects of a single, real being.

o **B. Bosanquet, AS Pringle-Pattison, GF Stout and Lord Haldane –** ***Do finite individuals possess a substantive or an adjectival*** mode of being?

The question under discussion is essentially this: can individual beings be considered substances, and in what sense should this be understood? If substance is defined according to the Aristotelian conception, that is, as a subject that cannot be a predicate, Mr. Bosanquet believes that this is a characteristic attributed to "things" as such, and which is unsuitable for the nature of finite spiritual individuals. For him, individuals are not considered as they truly are if they are taken distinctly and separately from the whole of which they are a part, which is the case when they

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He considers them as irreducible subjects; if taken in their total reality, they are rather predicable characteristics of the universe. It seems to us, in passing, that Mr. Bosanquet sometimes confuses an "abstract" idea—that is, the idea of a quality isolated from its subject—with an "extracted" idea—that is, the idea of a part separated from the whole or the set to which it belongs. Moreover, it would be necessary to know precisely how he conceives of what he calls "the universe" when he says that the relation of individuals to the universe is one of subordination and not of coordination. In any case, he understands the true substantiality of spiritual individuals in a completely different way, as "intentional," and as consisting in their claim to unity and freedom, which, moreover, are never fully realized. We could then say that individuals become all the more "substantive" and free the more they recognize themselves as "adjectives," that is, more dependent on the whole of which they are a part; and it is only by surpassing themselves and going out of themselves in some way that they tend to realize their substantiality and the fullness of their existence.

The confusion we believe we find in Mr. Bosanquet, and which we pointed out earlier, Mr. Pringle-Pattison also seems to have perceived, when he criticizes him for illegitimately transforming the relationship between whole and part into a relationship between substance and accident, and thereby arriving at a conception of "Reality" reminiscent of Spinoza's Substance. Mr. Pringle-Pattison believes that the goal toward which everything tends is the increasingly complete realization of individualization, while Mr. Bosanquet appears to take the opposite position; perhaps there is a grain of truth in both, and each sees only one side of the question, which, considered metaphysically, is that of the relationship between the individual and the universal; but here the discussion seems to stray somewhat onto moral and religious ground. Moreover, the intervention of certain moral, and even social, considerations is probably necessary to understand how Mr. Bosanquet is led to his conception of substantiality, so different from the traditional conception whose basis is purely logical.

It is primarily from a logical standpoint that Mr. Stout examines Mr. Bosanquet's thesis: his theory of predication, he says, essentially presupposes that the part is an attribute of the whole, and that every attribute of the part as such is also an attribute of the whole as such. In reality, what is an attribute of the whole is that it contains a certain part: the relation of the whole to the part is itself an adjective, and is consequently irreducibly distinct from its own relation to its noun. If, therefore, it is not possible to admit the general theory of predication, its application to the conception of individual beings must be rejected by the same token. Mr. Stout also maintains that finite individuals have intrinsic value, not only as individuals, but also as finite beings, in the sense that they possess positive characteristics that presuppose their limitation.

Lord Haldane seeks to explain the respective positions of Mr. Bosanquet (whom he associates with Mr. Bradley) and Mr. Pringle-Pattison by linking them to the whole of their general conceptions. Both appear to him to proceed equally from a

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Hegelian-style "objective idealism," but with different tendencies, finds a common flaw in their use, more or less disguised, of the notion of substance. For him, neither the noun nor the adjective adequately expresses the mode of being of finite individuals, because these terms evoke the relation of a thing to its properties, whereas here we are dealing with a higher degree of reality. He rightly insists on the danger of metaphors and images borrowed from our experience of the external world; in this regard, he even expresses the wish to see metaphysicians employ a terminology as rigorous as that of mathematicians. We entirely agree with this, but it seems to us at the same time that this wish would be easily fulfilled if one simply came to understand that metaphysical questions must be treated metaphysically.

o **L. Susan Stebbing –** ***The philosophical importance of the verb "to*** be"

The aim is to clarify the meaning of the verb "to be," or rather the different meanings it can have in propositions, and, to this end, to distinguish between "being," "existence," and "reality." Being, according to Russell, is distinguished as "existing" and "subsisting": the "existing" can be real or unreal, the latter being merely an object for thought and not part of a causal system; the "subsisting," the logical form of being, can be contradictory or non-contradictory. It would follow from this division that the "existing" is not necessarily in accordance with logical principles, although it is knowable only under this condition; such a conclusion is certainly quite debatable. Another interesting question concerns "existential" propositions: the author maintains that they do not differ from other propositions in their form, and that this form cannot in any way inform us about the nature or mode of being of the subject.

o **Dorothy Wrinch –** ***On the summation of*** pleasures (summons of pleasures)

The value of a set of several pleasures cannot be regarded as equal to the sum of the values of these various pleasures taken separately: the influence, positive or negative, of each of these pleasures on the others must be added to this sum.
According to the author, this does not imply that pleasure is quantitative, but only that pleasures can be arranged in an order implying a series of inequalities between them. It is true that this avoids the difficulties that would arise from defining the equality of two pleasures, but one may wonder whether an addition based on something other than quantities is capable of a well-defined meaning. Moreover, doesn't a theory of this kind bear a striking resemblance to Bentham's famous "arithmetic of pleasures," with all its arbitrariness and inconsistency?

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o **Arthur Lynch –** ***Association*** (The Association)

If we consider the association of elements of any kind that constitute a being and the reactions of these elements to one another, we can state the following principle: given a system, such as a human being, composed of certain physical and mental elements, and given also the ability to interpret the reactions of physical and mental forces within the system, we can determine the movements of this system in a given environment. This possibility is obviously theoretical, but it is nevertheless likely to open an interesting avenue for certain psychological research: for example, considering the "personal factor" in any activity allows us to envision the solution to problems such as determining the character and temperament of an author based on a methodical examination of their works.

o **AE Taylor –** The philosophy ***of Proclus*** Proclus)

A serious effort has recently been made to study and understand Neoplatonic philosophy; but it is regrettable that Proclus has not received the attention he deserves. Mr. Taylor here presents an exposition of the entire doctrine of this philosopher based on his *Stoicheiosis Theologike*, which can be regarded as a kind of elementary manual of Neoplatonism; Proclus's ideas are, moreover, very close to those of Plotinus, except on a few points. In this exposition, Mr. Taylor particularly emphasizes the conception of causality as a "transitive" and "asymmetrical" relation: the effect "participates" in the cause, and is always inferior to it, reflecting its nature only imperfectly. In this regard, he shows the connections between Scholasticism and Neoplatonism; And he also rightly points out that the latter went much further than certain modern philosophies to which it has sometimes been compared, notably those of Spinoza and Hegel. The absolute and transcendent One is a far more primordial principle than Spinoza's Substance; moreover, since it is beyond the Mind (ÿÿÿÿ), it is not an "idealism," and this is precisely what allows this doctrine to avoid dualism. We will only make one slight criticism of Mr. Taylor: that he has perhaps oversimplified and "rationalized" Neoplatonism, whose perspective seems to us even further removed from that of modern thinkers than he realizes. For us, there is something more purely metaphysical here, despite the identification of the One with the Platonic Idea of the Good, which strikes us as a kind of belated introduction of a specifically Greek concept into a doctrine largely inspired by the East. It is in this sense, we believe, that we should look if we are to truly understand the Alexandrians, for there is certainly something foreign to them, and even, in more than one respect, something opposed to the Greek mentality, of which Plato is perhaps the most complete representative. This dual origin of Neoplatonic ideas inevitably leads to some inconsistency; Aristotelianism would have lent itself much better than Platonism to an adaptation of this kind.

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March-April 1920

• Aristotelian Society. Supplementary vol. II. Problems of Science and Philosophy

(London, Williams and Norgate, 1919; vol. In-8° 220 pages).

This volume contains the papers read at the joint session held from July 11 to 14, 1919, by *the Aristotelian Society,* the *British Psychological Society ,* and the *Mind Association.*

o **Bertrand Russell – *On propositions:*** what they are and how they mean

Since a proposition is "what we believe," and the truth or falsity of a belief depends on a *fact* to which that belief relates, we must begin by examining the nature of facts (understanding "fact" as any complex thing). Two facts are said to have the same "form" when they differ only in their constituents; therefore, there are infinitely many forms of facts. In the simplest case, that of facts with three constituents (two terms and a "dyadic" relation), there are two possible forms, positive and negative, whose difference is irreducible.

The meaning of a proposition as a "form" of words obviously depends on the meaning of the words taken in isolation. If, contrary to the "behaviorist" theory of language, we maintain the existence of purely mental images (the negation of these images appearing indefensible in the realm of experience), the problem of the meaning of words can be reduced to that of the meaning of images. On the other hand, if we accept, with Hume, that all images are derived from impressions, that is, that their constituents are always copies of "prototypes" given in sensation, the relationship between an image and its prototype can be defined as follows: if an object O is the prototype of an image, we can, in the presence of O, recognize it as that *of which* we had an image, and then O is the "meaning" of that image.

A proposition, which is "the content of a belief," can consist of either words or images; generally, a proposition of the first kind "signifies" one of the second. In all cases, a proposition is a fact that has a

a certain structural analogy with its "objective," that is, with the fact that makes it true or false. As for the act of belief itself, it can be constituted by different attitudes toward a proposition (recollection, expectation, pure and simple timeless assent), which, moreover, imply nothing other than the existence of images having in themselves a certain dynamic power, without the addition of any special feeling.

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Now, what is the relationship between the content of a belief and its "objective"? Truth consists in a correspondence rather than in internal consistency; the truth or falsity of a belief depends on its relation to a fact other than itself, which is its "objective." There are two questions relating to truth and falsity: one formal, which concerns the relations between the form of a proposition and that of its "objective" in these two cases; the other material, which concerns the nature of the respective effects of true and false beliefs. The correspondence of propositions with their "objectives," defining their truth or falsity, can be more or less complex; but, in any case, truth and falsity, in their formal definition, are properties of propositions rather than of beliefs. On the contrary, if we consider what gives importance to truth and falsity from the point of view of action, it is no longer the propositions that matter, but rather the beliefs; only the pragmatists' mistake is wanting to *define* truth in this way.

o A.-N. Whitehead, Sir Oliver Lodge, J.-W. Nicholson, Henry Head, Mrs. Adrian Stephen and H. Wildon Carr – Time , *space and material: are they, and if so in what sense, the ultimate data of science ?*

I. – Mr. Whitehead criticizes current scientific conceptions for constituting only a hasty and simplistic systematization, which does not agree with the
Facts: In particular, the conception of time as a succession of instants makes it impossible to establish any physical relationship between nature at one instant and nature at another. According to the theory outlined here, and of which the author is to publish a more complete exposition shortly, it is necessary to distinguish in nature two essentially different types of entities, which are "events" and "objects," and then define certain fundamental relationships between them. Events can be regarded as relationships between objects, and objects as qualities of events; but each of these points of view also gives rise to difficulties. The theory of matter is the theory of "uniform" objects that give a quantitative character to the events in which they are situated. The conclusion is that the conception of a quantity of matter having a defined spatial configuration at an instant in time is a very complex abstraction, and by no means a fundamental datum of science.

II. – For Sir Oliver Lodge, what we grasp immediately and primitively is movement and force; time, space and matter are inferences, abstractions based on these data and intended to interpret them.

This conception, from which the main notions of the physical sciences can indeed be coherently deduced, essentially assumes that our most direct "experiences" are muscular sensations. In closing, the author warns

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against any theory that introduces discontinuity in space, time, or even energy.

III. – This last remark is aimed more specifically at the new physical theory of the “quantum.” According to Mr. Nicholson, this theory implies the existence of a new universal constant of nature, which would be, not a minimum of energy, but a minimum *of action ;* moreover, it would apply exclusively to “microscopic” phenomena (for which the concepts of force and energy would no longer be fundamental data), while the old physics would remain valid for “macroscopic” phenomena. Time, space, and matter would be fundamental data common to all of physics, because they are part of the expression of all the universal constants that exist in nature.

IV. – Mr. Head, admitting that all sensation is the result of countless purely physiological changes, focuses particularly on determining the physiological basis of the spatial and temporal aspects of sensation. These aspects would be entirely distinct from the qualitative and affective aspects and could be dissociated from them; while the latter would depend on the activity of the optic layer, they would be due to that of the cortical layer of the brain.

V. – Mrs. Adrian Stephen adopts a Bergsonian perspective (the ideas she presents are mainly borrowed from *Matter and Memory),* and she summarizes the answer to the question posed as follows: matter is the ultimate given of science; space is the form that science imposes on its objects (logical form or form of thought, and no longer form of sensibility as for Kant); finally, science cannot deal with time, because it cannot deal with memory, that is to say, with the act that transforms matter into “phenomena”, which is the essential principle of all life, and which distinguishes mind from matter.

VI. – To conclude this discussion, Mr. Wildon Carr emphasizes above all the “principle of relativity,” which, for him, affects not only knowledge, but *the very being* of space, time, and matter. The true philosophical doctrine in this regard is that of the 17th- century philosophers, notably Malebranche and Berkeley: there are no magnitudes, only perspectives. If space, time, and matter are the fundamental data of science, this does not mean that they are absolute entities, but that they are derived from that particular perspective which constitutes the frame of reference proper to human beings.

o **Hastings Rashdall, J.-H. Muirhead, F.-C.-S. Schiller and C.-F. d'Arcy:** Can individual minds be ***included in*** the mind of God?

I. – Against Messrs. Bradley and Bosanquet, Mr. Rashdall supports the negative thesis, because, he says, a consciousness cannot in any way be part of another

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consciousness. We can see from this that he poses the question on a rather psychological level; he expressly states this, and besides, isn't metaphysics forbidden to anyone who admits, like him, that they cannot place themselves outside of time? He makes a distinction between the Absolute, which can include all minds, but which he seems to disregard because it is not a "consciousness," and God, who, as "mind" *or* "consciousness," cannot include other minds.

One might even be tempted to think that this God must be limited, since "God and man are two spirits that are part of the same universe." As for the distinction that should be made between "identity of existence" and "identity of content," there would be much to say on the subject, but we cannot address it here.

II. – Mr. Muirhead does not think that the conception of the Absolute as including everything entails the impossibility of this Absolute being “spirit” in a certain sense, and he envisions an “inclusion” which, without suppressing separate existence, would be based essentially on a unity of “purpose” , giving a common direction to the particular actions which belong to individuals.

III. – For Mr. Schiller, there may be a contradiction between the distinct existence of individual minds and their inclusion in God, and such a contradiction might arise from the fact that religious conceptions have a psychological source that is more sentimental than intellectual; but, nevertheless, one observes experimental examples of a kind of inclusion of one mind within another, either in abnormal cases of “dissociation of personality” or even in the normal relations between consciousness in the waking state and consciousness in the dream state. However, these analogies suggest no explanation, and, as regards the unity of intention envisaged by Mr. Muirhead, Mr. Schiller objects that an intention presupposes a limitation that cannot be applied to the operations of a universal mind.

IV. – According to M. d'Arcy, among the various meanings of the word "inclusion," we must begin with that in which we can say that our experience includes all our objects. Just as each mind is the principle of unity of its own experience, so too must there be, analogously, a supreme principle of unity that transcends the oppositions between individual existences and produces the final unification; and, in both cases, the unification ensures to each of the elements it comprises the preservation of its own particular nature. For this to be so, it is insufficient to conceive of God as "personal"; he must be "personal and something more." This is far more truly metaphysical than anything that had been said up to this point in this discussion, and also, whatever the author himself may seem to think, than the various considerations he subsequently engages in, which involve the question of a "spiritual" or "material" view of reality.

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o G. Dawes Hicks, G.-E. Moore, Beatrice Edgell and C.-D. Broad: *Is there “Knowledge by acquaintance”?*

The question posed here is difficult to translate, since in French there is hardly anything other than the word "connaissance" (knowledge) that can render both "knowledge" and "acquaintance"; but Mr. Russell distinguishes two kinds of "knowledge": one, which he calls "presentation" or "acquaintance," is a two-term relation of a subject to a single object; the other, which he calls "judgment," is a multiple relation of a subject to several objects. The question, then, is whether this distinction is well-founded; knowledge through "acquaintance," if it truly exists, would moreover be free from error, since it is only in judgment that we can err, any error concerning the relations of several objects to one another.

I. – For Mr. Dawes Hicks, the term “acquaintance” conflates two different kinds of relations: the relation of a subject to an object, and the relation of that subject to its consciousness of an object; yet it is only the second that is “direct,” a characteristic that Mr. Russell attributes to “acquaintance.” By answering the question negatively, Mr. Hicks essentially intends to deny sensory knowledge the “intuitive” character; and, for this reason, he insists on the difficulty of drawing a definite line between “acquaintance” and judgment, particularly in the case of sensory relations and qualities considered abstractly: if every act of knowledge implies distinction and comparison, it is inseparable from some judgment. As for the opposition that one wants to establish between the knowledge of "things" and that of "truths", if an object of the senses cannot be said to be properly true or false, the way in which an object appears can be, and in the same sense as propositions.

II. – Mr. Moore maintains that what Mr. Russell means by "acquaintance" is an undeniable fact, regardless of his theories on the subject. "Acquaintance" is identical, either with the subject-object relation or with a particular variety of this relation; but it must also be admitted that it cannot have the same meaning for abstract qualities as it does for the data of the senses properly speaking. What is truly at issue is not so much the existence of knowledge through "acquaintance" as Mr. Russell's theory that there can be "acquaintance" without judgment, in the sense that "acquaintance" would be logically independent of knowledge of truths; and it is indeed possible that this theory is false, as the arguments supporting it do not appear very conclusive.

III. – But, for Miss Edgell, this theory amounts to the very affirmation of “acquaintance” as a cognitive relation; by denying the theory, she therefore intends to deny knowledge by “acquaintance”, which she declares psychologically impossible, because nothing could come out of it, and which she regards simply as “a myth invented by epistemology”.

IV. – Mr. Broad finds it preferable to divide the question: firstly, is there “acquaintance”? He answers affirmatively on this point, defining “acquaintance” as the relationship we have with sensory data.

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prior to any act of judgment, and which, moreover, persists even after the judgment has been made. Secondly, is this "acquaintance" knowledge? It is not in the same sense as true judgment, which constitutes true knowledge; it can be called "cognitive," but a distinction must be made between "acquaintance" and knowledge *through* "acquaintance." The latter can be regarded as direct in the sense that it is not attained by inference, and it is opposed to knowledge by "description"; but it does not follow from this that judgments based on "acquaintance" are necessarily infallible, although the risk of error seems to be at its lowest degree.

July-August 1920

- **Ettore Galli – *Nel regno del conoscere e del ragionare*** (In the domain of knowledge and reasoning)

(1 vol. in-8°, 300 pp., Fratelli Bocca, Turin, 1919).

- ***At the roots*** of morality

(1 vol. in-8°, 415 pp., Società Editrice “Unitas”, Milan, 1919).

In the first of these two works, the author attempts to bring the logical point of view closer to the psychological point of view—we should even say to reduce it to the latter—by showing that the reasoning process merely reproduces and to continue the formative or genetic process of knowledge. He insists, perhaps too exclusively, on the "synthesizing" action of thought: a "general schema" is formed by the superimposition of successive sensations, reinforcing their common elements, and not by the elimination of their differences. When such a schema is constituted, judgment consists of incorporating a new fact into it. Induction is the fundamental mode of reasoning because it proceeds in the same direction as the acquisition of knowledge, by relating particular cases to a general schema. Deduction, on the other hand, should be based on a prior induction, which it merely reproduces in reverse.

Logic, as it is ordinarily conceived, would therefore have the fault of considering from a static point of view facts that can only be explained by considering them dynamically, in their psychological development, because, thought being one, logical laws are in the end only psychological laws.

Is this reduction truly justified? Undoubtedly, logical operations are, in a sense, psychological facts and can be studied from this perspective; but this is not the aim of logic, which, in truth, does not even consider them as "facts." The distinction, and even the separation, of the two logical and psychological viewpoints will therefore always have its justification, because

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Two sciences can be truly distinct while studying the same things, simply because they study them from different points of view. Thus, to want to absorb logic into psychology would amount to suppressing it; but it is possible, after all, that the very point of view of logic may appear non-existent or illegitimate in the eyes of some, and especially of those who, as is the case here, want to derive all knowledge from sensation alone and refuse to admit any principle of another order, as well as to distinguish the idea from the image.
But isn't it a little strange that, when we want to discuss the very foundations of logical certainty, we also consider certain "evolutionary" theories, which are only simple hypotheses, to be indisputable?

The same tendency to reduce everything to psychology is also evident in the second work, this time with regard to morality. However, in our view, it is much more justified here than in the previous case, because morality, having only a practical scope, would be nothing if it were not grounded in psychology. The author's thesis can be summarized briefly as follows: morality is an expression of the tendency that drives humankind, like all living beings, to spontaneously seek the most favorable conditions of existence; feeling leads us to find good what is useful or advantageous to life, what produces well-being in all its forms, and from this, by abstraction, is derived the notion of moral good. The tendencies that morality aims to satisfy are therefore, fundamentally, biological forces that have taken on a psychological character in humankind. If we also consider the conditions of social life, viewed essentially as collaboration, we can explain the origin of notions such as rights and duties. If morality assumes that life has value in itself, it is because it is in the nature of life to always strive to preserve and improve itself; and it is this attachment to life, a purely sentimental fact at first, which then leads to postulating the good as a requirement of reason.

We entirely agree with the author when he sees moral notions as nothing more than a transformation of sentimental elements, and even these elements are perhaps never as completely rationalized as he thinks: for example, can the concept of "duty for duty's sake" be considered as having an absolutely logical character? However, the factors that contribute to the development of these notions are extremely complex, and we do not believe it is possible to account for them entirely through what we might call "biological utilitarianism": this approach undoubtedly leads to something that can be called "good," if you will, but which is not precisely moral good. What this theory does not truly explain are the particular characteristics that properly constitute the moral point of view; for us, not only is this point of view incomprehensible outside of social life, but it also presupposes psychological conditions that are far more specific than is commonly believed. Moreover, we should not exaggerate the importance of feeling and what derives from it to the point of making it the entire essence of human nature; it is true that

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Intelligence must be reduced to very little for those who want to extract it entirely from sensation.

September 1920

• T.-L. Penido – *Bergson's Intuitive Method: A Critical Essay*

(1 vol. in-8°, 226 pp., F. Alcan, Paris, 1918).

This work comprises, firstly, an exposition of Bergsonian intuitionism; and the author should be congratulated for having successfully completed this part of his task, for it is very difficult to give a clear and precise idea of what he very aptly characterizes as "a doctrine that is extremely elusive, constantly blurring its theses and softening its assertions, presenting itself as constituted simply by a series of increasing probabilities, that is to say, as capable of indefinite improvements and progress." There is even this remarkable aspect, that Mr.

Bergson, while displaying a certain theoretical disdain for analysis, is as far removed from it as possible in practice, and his philosophy, which insists so much on the irreducible simplicity of the intuitive act, unfolds in insights of prodigious complexity. But we will not dwell here on the exposition of the doctrine, and we will instead point out the main points of the Critique that Mr. [name missing] subsequently presents.
Penido, and which constitutes the second part of his book: sometimes quite severe criticism, while striving to remain sympathetic, especially in the sense of that "divining sympathy" which, according to Mr. Bergson himself, allows one to penetrate "as far as possible", by "inserting" oneself into the philosopher's thought.

First, what exactly is Bergsonian intuition? We cannot, of course, "demand a definition of what, by hypothesis, is indefinable," but we can be surprised to encounter such diverse descriptions, and it is highly debatable whether Bergson succeeded, as one of his disciples claims, in "giving the notion of intuition a rigorously determined content." After attempting to distinguish different intuitions, Penido observes that each of them, taken individually, "seems to coincide perfectly with Bergsonian intuition," which "is, by nature, vague, diffuse, and scattered"; and, if we delve deeper, we realize that the "new" method boils down primarily to "infra-rational" intuition, that it is quite simply "a phenomenon of creative or dynamic imagination," very close to artistic invention. If this is the case, Mr. Bergson hardly differs from other philosophers except in that he "abandons himself entirely to his imagination," instead of controlling it with reason.

Next, the "new philosophy" seems extremely concerned with escaping relativism: it is therefore necessary to examine whether it makes possible the "transition to the objective".
However, not only is the value attributed to "pure perception" highly arbitrary, but the logical conclusion of the doctrine is also "a kind of monism."

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psychological," where "intuition is no longer knowledge, it is creation." We therefore risk arriving at "solipsism," and then "the self, in reaching itself, would also reach total reality, but this would be at the price of the most radical phenomenalism"; such may not be Mr. Bergson's intention, but he "will one day find a Schelling to push his system to the extreme limits it entails."

Another objection concerns the way in which the relationship between intuition and intelligence is considered: the proposed method seemed to naturally exclude intelligence from philosophy, after having "emptied it of all speculative content, through a radical pragmatism if ever there was one"; but Mr.'s attitude.
Bergson was "more unpredictable, therefore more intuitive," and "he only exacerbated the opposition between two modes of knowledge in order to better unite them afterward." Indeed, not only does "philosophy extend and complete science," but "without the contribution of intelligence, intuition is impossible, for Bergson insists greatly on the absolute inadequacy of a metaphysics devoid of scientific foundations," even though we cannot know exactly how "the passage from the discursive to the intuitive" is accomplished for him; he even goes "so far as to make the value of intuition dependent on its agreement with science," which he nevertheless regards as essentially symbolic and relative. Linked to the current state of science, philosophy may, depending on the era, lead to "opposite results"; and if this is so, is it really worth inflicting painful and unnatural "distortions" upon oneself? And the author cites examples that Bergson constantly uses of dialectic, analysis, and reasoning by analogy, not to mention those "comparisons that take the place of reasons," and those images that lead one to wonder "if the master is sure he understands himself." It follows from all this that Bergsonism is, fundamentally, a system like any other, speaking like them of "a very significant fact" (Bergson's expression), which is the perception of duration, and that intuition, "left to itself, does not seem able to serve as a philosophical method, at least not in the current state of humanity."

The negative side of Bergson's work, namely his critique of other doctrines, is much clearer than the positive side, and also more robust despite all its shortcomings. Bergson's critique has the merit of denouncing real errors, but it has gone too far by transforming itself into "anti-intellectualism"; "it is not against all intellectualism, but against a certain intellectualism" (we would rather say rationalism), and his arguments involve numerous confusions. For example, Bergson always confuses the concept with the image; but we would add that his psychological empiricism does not allow him to do otherwise, and that it is precisely because he is an empiricist that he speaks "as an absolute nominalist." Mr. Penido quite rightly insists on the difference in nature between the idea and the image, and he believes that Mr. Bergson has given us only a "caricature" of intelligence, for which he mistakes what is in reality only "static" or reproductive imagination. The opposition between intuition and intelligence would thus be reduced to the opposition between dynamic and static imagination: this may be true in practice, if not in principle; one could argue that...

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To respond that Mr. Bergson, when he speaks of intelligence, wants to make it synonymous with reason, we would also say that he only understands reason to the extent that empiricism can grasp it. In any case, Mr. Bergson's intuition seems to us above all "anti-rationalist," and Mr. Le Roy can remain faithful to his thought while correcting his language when he declares that intuition is neither "anti-intellectual" nor even "extra-intellectual," because he realizes that intelligence should not be reduced to reason alone.

This reflection leads us to another observation, which is of paramount importance to us: Mr. Penido does indeed speak several times of "intellectual intuition," and he even seems to anticipate the distinction between pure intellect and reason; but he has not elucidated the characteristics of true intellectual or metaphysical intuition, which is essentially "supra-rational," and therefore opposed to the "infra-rational" intuition of Bergsonism. True intellectualism is at least as far removed from rationalism as Bergsonian intuitionism can be, but in precisely the opposite direction; if there is a metaphysical intuitionism that is this intellectualism, there is also an anti-metaphysical intuitionism, which is that of Mr. Bergson. Indeed, while metaphysics is the knowledge of the universal, the "new philosophy" intends to focus on the individual, and it is thus, not "beyond," but rather "below" physics, or rational science, the knowledge of the general. Now, if Bergsonians confuse the universal with the general, this is at least one point on which they will agree with their rationalist adversaries. On the other hand, it is true that "Mr. Bergson's mistake is, in short, to identify psychology and metaphysics," but this identification with anthropomorphism, which it inevitably entails, is the very negation of true metaphysics, as is also the conception that places all reality in "becoming." A philosophy that takes life as its object and a science that takes matter as its object are equally foreign and indifferent to metaphysics; and if, as we believe, there is only "pseudo-metaphysics" in all systems of modern philosophy, Bergsonism is no exception.

Perhaps Mr. Penido is being somewhat ironic in his conclusion, where he declares that "it is still to be Bergsonian, in the best sense of the word, to abandon Bergsonism in practice in order to seek beyond it a more synthetic thought that transcends it"; in any case, in our opinion, it would be a waste of time to search in the same direction, unless one wishes to limit oneself to doing pure and simple psychology. It is true that all intuition is essentially synthetic, just as discursive reason is essentially analytic; but metaphysics is a synthesis of a transcendent order, without any relation to the immanentism of the "vital impulse."

Furthermore, Mr. Penido has particularly astutely observed the mystical and experimental tendencies that, in contemporary thought, link Bergsonism to theosophical and spiritualist currents. Is it not even to be feared that these affinities will intensify, given that Mr. Bergson, in one of his most recent writings, finds that "it would be a great deal to be able to establish on the

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"The field of experience, the possibility and even the probability of the survival of the soul"? The question, thus posed, would on the contrary be of entirely negligible importance in the eyes of a metaphysician.

May-June 1921

- **Ettore Galli – *Nel dominio dell "io"*** (In the domain of "me")

(1 vol. in-8°, 206 pp., Società Editrice "Unitas", Milan and Rome, 1919).

- ***Nel mondo dello spirit*** (In the world of the spirit)

(1 vol. in-8°, 252 pages, Società Editrice "Unitas", Milan and Rome, 1919).

The "self" can be considered either in its internal constitution, in its subjective content, or in its external development; it is from the first of these two points of view, which we might call static, that it has most generally been studied. Mr. Galli, on the contrary, wanted to treat the question here from a dynamic point of view, and this by considering what he calls the meaning of "mine": the "mine" is an expansion of the "self," and, by studying it, one reaches the "self" in its very process of formation. This sense of "mine" is, moreover, a very complex psychological phenomenon; the author analyzes its constituent elements, then examines its multiple varieties, first according to the objects to which it applies, and then according to the specific nature of the "self" and the diversity of individual temperaments. There are nuances here that seem to us truly too subtle, as frequently happens with psychologists, and, furthermore, all of this is somewhat diffuse; this latter flaw is, moreover, common to all of Mr. Galli's works, whose thought would certainly benefit from being expressed in a more concise form. The last two chapters are devoted to the "psychogenetic" formation of the sense of "mine," studied in the child, and to its "phylogenetic" origin, in correspondence with the mental and social development of humanity; here, naturally, there is a very large degree of hypothesis. The essential idea is that "mine", while being an extension of the "self" onto things, is at the same time a condition for the very constitution of the "self".

The second work comprises four parts, all linked by their sole purpose of addressing psychological questions. The first part justifies the value of introspection as a method of observation; perhaps, however, it goes a bit too far to reduce external observation to internal observation, and to claim that it can only be called external "by convention," under the pretext that the idea or representation we may have of anything is always an internal fact. We know full well that psychologists are quite prone to this exaggeration, which aims at nothing less

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than to make all other sciences dependent on their own, but we strongly doubt they will ever succeed in getting this viewpoint accepted by the representatives of those other sciences. The second part is a psychological and sociological study of the "joke" (the Italian word *scherzo* has a nuance that is difficult to render in French: it is more properly a "trick," good or bad, that one plays on someone). In the third, the author analyzes the phenomenon of expectation, which he takes care to distinguish carefully from attention, and of which he considers different cases separately, depending on whether there is, with regard to the events that are going to occur, certain prediction, uncertain prediction, or unpredictability, and also, on the other hand, depending on the various emotions that accompany or follow the expectation. Finally, the fourth part deals with "freedom in the light of psychology": it seems that Mr. Galli's main objective was to show that "freedom of indifference" is illusory and even inconceivable, and that he intended to take up and develop, by transposing it onto purely psychological ground, Spinoza's argument of "ignorance of motives"; but he erred in not clearly marking the distinction that must be made between the so-called "freedom of indifference" and true "free will," the latter accommodating itself quite well to the existence of motives, and even essentially presupposing them. In short, what is most important to remember in the conclusion is that there is no consciousness of freedom; on this point, we are in complete agreement with the author: consciousness can only grasp a belief in freedom, and not freedom itself, which is not of the order of mental phenomena. But, if that is the case, it is a waste of time to try to argue psychologically for or against freedom; this question, because it is fundamentally a question of "nature", is not and cannot be a psychological question, and we should give up trying to treat it as such.

• D r Eugène Osty – *The Meaning of Human Life*

(1 vol. in-16°, XII-272 pages, “La Renaissance du Livre”, Paris, 1919).

The author announces in his introduction that "you will not find a philosophical system here", and that "this book aims to take a kind of scientific view of our lives as thinking beings, without ever losing touch with the facts".
These are excellent intentions, but unfortunately the "scientistic" spirit is not the true scientific spirit, and evolutionary hypotheses are not facts. Those who readily proclaim themselves, in the best of faith, "free from prejudice," are sometimes those who actually have the most prejudice: belief in "intellectual progress," in "moral progress," in "integral civilization"—in short, in all the idols of the modern mind, not forgetting "nature," "reason," and "life." We cannot consider discussing all these conceptions here, but we find it very strange that, as soon as these ideas come into play, people so readily settle for simple assertions: these are articles of faith… If, instead of embarking on adventurous speculations about the conditions of existence of “primitive man,” one were to confine oneself more modestly to a somewhat thorough study of historical antiquity or even the Middle Ages, one would undoubtedly be led to modify many conclusions, and, for example, one might hesitate to write that “it was

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It was only in the 16th century AD that humanity passed from its long intellectual infancy to the age of reason." It is true that intellectuality, as the author understands it, seems to consist almost entirely in the knowledge and use of natural phenomena, which is a very particular point of view. Perhaps the most curious part concerns the possible future of humanity: we are told that a new psychic faculty, described as "metanormal" (this neologism and several others of the same kind are very close to being barbarisms), is "becoming established in the human species." This faculty comprises a very complex set of phenomena, grouped under the somewhat vague name of "lucidity"; we, for our part, are far from contesting the reality of these phenomena, which must always be separated from the fanciful or even unreasonable explanations that have been given for them; but we do not think that we can see in it the germ of some kind of additional sense with which future men will be endowed.

Moreover, we don't see what's truly new here: the facts in question were well known since antiquity; why say that they could have been "illusory" then, while they are no longer so today? It's because, without that, the theory of evolution would be flawed… If a book like this is of interest, it is primarily as a psychological document, very characteristic of the mentality of some of our contemporaries.

November-December 1921

• D r Joseph Devillas – *Systematic Trials*

(1 vol. in-16°, 350 pp., P. Lethielleux, Paris, 1920).

Under this title, which is perhaps not entirely felicitous, are gathered insights that are often interesting, but whose general flaw is a rather regrettable lack of clarity. This flaw stems not only from the fact that, as the author acknowledges, some of the notes are too brief, insufficiently developed, and under-coordinated; it is also due, in part, to the use of somewhat peculiar terminology, which sometimes makes reading difficult. The same observation could, moreover, be made about many philosophical works, and we can only agree with this assessment.
A statement like this, which at least denotes an awareness of this imperfection: "Philosophical language would need a dictator to fix its meaning precisely; many side discussions would be avoided, for, if a well-formed language is not science itself, it contributes to acquiring it and testifies to coherent notions already acquired." If agreement is difficult to achieve in such matters, each person could at least, for their own part, strive to avoid all unnecessary complications and to define exactly the terms they use; and we would add that it would also be necessary to define and distinguish the points of view adopted, in order to thereby determine the meaning and scope of questions that often belong to very diverse orders.
This is what happens with the work in question: among the many questions that it

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Some topics are treated more or less completely; some simply fall under the purview of scientific philosophy, while others, by their nature, could be linked to metaphysics. However, one should not seek an illusory connection between orders of knowledge that must be profoundly separated, a connection that can only produce confusion. Finally, for the sake of clarity in any exposition, it is perhaps advantageous not to try to include too many ideas in a single volume.

However, it would be a great mistake to limit ourselves to a general impression, for there are chapters and paragraphs that strike us as quite worthy of interest. First, there are some very valid critiques of certain theories, particularly transformism, and these critiques are not purely negative: for example, regarding the question of transformism, the author makes remarks on the notions of species and individual that certainly need further development, but which, as they stand, seem very likely to provoke thought. Furthermore, on freedom and determinism, on the relationship between the temporal and the timeless, on the correlation between quantity and quality, and on many other points, there are views that certainly transcend the level of current philosophical speculation; it is to be hoped that the author will one day have the opportunity to revisit them and develop them more clearly and precisely.

What could give rise to many objections is the primary role that is consistently attributed to the correlative relationships of resemblance and difference; perhaps this is where we should see what is truly "systematic" in the author's thought… There are also drawbacks to using terms like "abstract" and "concrete" too frequently, which are quite ambiguous, at least as soon as one departs from their rigorous technical meaning. In certain passages, it seems that this opposition between the abstract and the concrete is taken as synonymous with that between the possible and the real; this proves that both also need clarification. Moreover, for us, the distinction between the possible and the real is only valid in particular domains, and it no longer has any meaning when one adopts a metaphysical, that is to say, universal, point of view. We must never forget that, as Dr. Devillas very rightly says , "our world" is not "the Universe".

We must also mention another line of thought that is no less interesting: it is an attempt to interpret, or, if you will, adapt, certain theological concepts, such as those of creation and the Fall, which are applied in a very ingenious way to a theory of natural laws. According to this theory, the multiple and hierarchical laws presuppose a disharmonic element in the environment, and their meaning is that of restrictions or obstacles guarding against total disharmony; the relative "legal order" must therefore be essentially distinguished from the absolute "pure order." To the hierarchy of laws, which defines the world of experience, corresponds, as an expression in human knowledge, the hierarchy of the technical sciences; and the latter, thus considered, gives rise to entirely original and even unforeseen considerations. On the other hand

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On the other hand, and as a complement to the same theory, the action of the supernatural is conceived as the introduction into the world of an element of harmonization; grace is added to nature, but it is not contrary to it. This suggests a possible rapprochement between the point of view of religion and that of philosophy and science; but such a rapprochement, to be valid, must allow for the distinction between modes of thought which, while perhaps exhibiting certain similarities, nonetheless apply to different domains. We would therefore readily express some reservations, for there are ideas that cannot be "rationalized" without risking their diminishment and distortion; and this, which is true for theological ideas, is even more so for properly metaphysical ideas; but, of course, "supra-rational" does not mean "irrational." The distinction of viewpoints, to which we alluded earlier, would be of the utmost importance in bringing order to certain tendencies in current thought, which can be called "traditionalist", and which are precisely those represented by works like that of Dr. Devillas.

- **Jean De La Harpe – *Religion as “preservation of value” in its relation to Harald's general philosophy Höffding***

Preface by A. Lalande (1 vol. in-8°, VII-122 pp., G, Bridel, Lausanne, and Fischbacher, Paris, 1920).

We confess that the appeal of a certain "religious psychology," which seems quite fashionable today, largely eludes us: to treat religion as a purely psychological "fact" is to confuse it with religiosity, which is to religion, understood in its proper sense, roughly what a shadow is to the body. This observation, moreover, is aimed more at Höffding than at M. de la Harpe, who confined himself to conducting an extremely conscientious study of his theories, comprising, on the one hand, an analytical exposition, and, on the other hand, a genetic and critical examination.

For Höffding, “religion is reduced to the principle of the preservation of value in reality; it comes down entirely to the firm will to maintain the values of life beyond the limits within which the human will can act upon them.” To clarify the meaning of this “axiom of the preservation of value,” one must first consider the concepts of “reality” and “value” that it presupposes. M. de la Harpe has endeavored to establish as clearly as possible the sequence of the various viewpoints he encountered in the work of the Danish philosopher, without being deterred by the excessive subtlety of his analyses, nor by the difficulties of his terribly complicated language.

But the part of this work that seems to us the clearest and most interesting is the "genetic study of Höffding's thought," that is to say, in short, his intellectual biography, where the principal influences that acted upon him are very well disentangled, notably those of Spinoza and Kant. As for the last chapter, entitled "critical study," M. de la Harpe does not discuss it there.

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As one might have expected, the very core of the ideas he has just presented is addressed; he confines himself, as he himself states, to a "critique of coherence," in which he primarily contests Höffding's right to call himself a "monist." The scope of this reproach has, moreover, been considerably mitigated beforehand by Mr. Lalande, who demonstrated in his preface how relative terms such as monism, dualism, and pluralism truly are, to such an extent that, depending on the specific issues at hand, they can sometimes be used interchangeably to characterize the same doctrine: they "only have a precise and full meaning when applied to the various solutions of particular problems, and not to the entirety of a philosophy."

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September-October 1921

- **I. Goldziher, Professor at the University of Budapest – *Dogma and Law in Islam: A History of the Dogmatic and Legal Development of the Muslim Religion***

Translation by F. Arin (One volume in-8° of 315 pages. P. Geuthner, Paris, 1920).

This work possesses the qualities and defects common to almost all German works of the same kind: it is very conscientiously done from a historical and documentary point of view, but one should not look to it for a profound understanding of ideas and doctrines. Moreover, in a completely general way, what is now called the "science of religions"

It essentially rests on two postulates that we, for our part, can only regard as mere prejudices. The first, which could be called the "rationalist" postulate, consists of treating all religion as a purely human fact, as a "phenomenon" of a psychological or sociological nature; the importance given respectively to individual elements and social factors varies greatly depending on the school of thought. The second, which is evident from the book's subtitle, is the "evolutionist" postulate: the "development" in question is not simply the logical unfolding of everything the doctrine implied in embryo from the outset, but a series of radical changes brought about by external influences, and which can even lead to contradictions.

It is posited as a principle that dogmas have "evolved," and this assertion is to be accepted without question: it is a kind of negative dogma intended to overturn all positive dogmas and replace them with the sole belief in "progress," that great illusion of the modern world. Mr. Goldziher's book comprises six chapters, on each of which we will present a few observations.

I. *Muhammad and Islam.* – We are familiar with the thesis, dear to certain psychologists, and especially to physicians who dabble in psychology, of the “pathology” of mystics, prophets, and founders of religions; we recall a particularly repugnant application of this thesis to Judaism and to

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Christianity[1]. There is something of the same tendency here, although the author emphasizes it less than others have; in any case, the "rationalist" spirit dominates this chapter. One even frequently encounters phrases like this: "Muhammad *had such and such revealed to* him"; this is extremely unpleasant. "Evolutionism" appears in the distinction, one might even say the opposition, that is drawn between the Meccan and Medinan periods: from one to the other, there is supposedly a change, due to external circumstances, in the prophetic character of Muhammad; we do not believe that those who examine the Quranic texts without preconceived ideas can find anything similar.

On the other hand, the doctrine taught by Muhammad is not at all an "eclecticism"; the truth is that he always presented himself as a *continuator* of the Judeo-Christian tradition, expressly denying that he wanted to institute a new religion and even to innovate anything in terms of dogmas and laws (and that is why the word "Mahometan" is absolutely rejected by his followers).
Let us add further that the meaning of the word *Islam,* which is "submission to the Divine Will", is not interpreted in a perfectly correct way, nor is the concept of religious "universality" in Muhammad; these two questions are, moreover, quite closely related.

II. *Development of the Law.* – The author should be commended for affirming the existence, too often overlooked by Europeans, of a certain “spirit of *tolerance ”* in Islam, right from its origins, and also for recognizing that the various Muslim “rites” are by no means “sects.” On the other hand, although the legal aspect of a doctrine is certainly the one most amenable to development necessitated by adaptation to circumstances (but on the condition that this development, as long as it remains within orthodoxy, does not entail any real change, that it merely makes explicit certain consequences implicitly contained in the doctrine), we cannot accept the preponderance attributed to social and political considerations, which are supposed to have influenced the purely religious perspective itself. There is a kind of reversal of roles here, which is explained by the fact that modern Westerners have, for the most part, become accustomed to viewing religion as simply one element of social life among many others; For Muslims, on the contrary, the entire social order depends on religion, is somehow integrated into it, and a similar situation is found in all civilizations which, like Eastern civilizations in general, have an essentially traditional basis (whether the tradition in question is religious or of another nature). On more specific points, there is a clear bias towards treating the *hadiths,* that is, the sayings of the Prophet preserved by tradition, as "later inventions"; this may have occurred in particular cases, acknowledged by Muslim theology, but it should not be generalized. Finally, it is far too convenient to characterize

[1] The author to whom we are referring and his book relating to Christianity were, during the war, the cause of extremely unfortunate incidents for French influence in the East (see Mermeix, *Le commandement unique: Sarrail et les armées d'Orient,* pp. 31-33).

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dismissively labeling as "popular superstition" anything that might be inconvenient to "rationalism".

III. *Dogmatic Development.* – This chapter begins with an attempt to contrast what might be called “prophetism” and “theologism”: theologians, in seeking to interpret the revelations of the prophets, introduce, as needed, things the prophets had never considered, and it is in this way that orthodoxy gradually takes shape. We will respond to this by saying that orthodoxy is not something *that is created,* but rather, by its very definition, the constant maintenance of doctrine in its original, traditional form.

The presentation of the discussions concerning determinism and free will reveals a certain misperception, so to speak, stemming from the modern mindset: far from seeing this as a *fundamental question,* the great scholars of Islam have always regarded these discussions as utterly futile. On the other hand, we question to what extent it is truly accurate to consider the *Mu'tazilites* as "rationalists"; in any case, it is often a mistake to translate *aql* as "reason."

Another, and more serious, point: anthropomorphism has never been inherent to Muslim orthodoxy. Islam, as a doctrine (we are not referring to the ever-present possibility of individual deviations), only admits anthropomorphism as a figure of speech (it even strives to minimize this kind of symbolism), and as a concession to the limitations of human understanding, which most often requires the support of certain analogical representations. We use the word "representations" in its ordinary sense, and not in the very specific meaning frequently given to it by Mr. Goldziher, which is reminiscent of the fanciful theories of what, in France, is called the "sociological school."

IV. *Asceticism and Sufism.* – We could say much on this chapter, which is far from being as clear as one might wish, and which even contains many confusions and gaps. According to the author, asceticism was initially foreign to Islam, into which it was later introduced by various influences, and it is these added ascetic tendencies that gave rise to Sufism. These assertions are quite debatable, and, above all, Sufism is in reality something quite different from asceticism. Moreover, the term Sufism is used here somewhat abusively in its generality, and distinctions should be made: it refers to Muslim esotericism, and there are many esoteric schools that do not readily accept this designation, at least not currently, because it has come to commonly designate tendencies that are not at all their own. In fact, there is very little connection between Persian Sufism and the vast majority of Arab schools; the latter are far less mystical, far more purely metaphysical, and also more strictly attached to orthodoxy (whatever importance they may place on external practices). In this regard, we must say that it is a complete mistake to try to oppose Sufism itself to orthodoxy: the distinction here is between esotericism and exotericism, which relate to different domains and are not opposed to one another; orthodoxy and heterodoxy can exist in both. Therefore, no historical divergence has occurred

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"Accommodation" between two opposing "systems"; the two domains are clearly delimited enough that, normally, there can be neither conflict nor contradiction, and esotericists have never been able, as such, to be accused of heresy.
As for the origins of Muslim esotericism, the influence of Neoplatonism is by no means proven by an identity of thought in certain respects; it should not be forgotten that Neoplatonism is merely a Greek expression of Eastern ideas, so that the Easterners did not need to go through the Greeks to rediscover what, in essence, belonged to them. It is true that this view has the drawback of going against certain prejudices. Regarding the Hindu (and perhaps also Buddhist) influence that the author believes he has discovered, the question is somewhat more complex: we know, from direct observation, that there is indeed a fundamental identity between Muslim esotericism and the doctrines of India, despite a rather significant difference in form; but the same observation could be made about Far Eastern metaphysics, and this does not justify concluding that there were any borrowings. Men belonging to different civilizations may well, it seems to us, have directly arrived at the knowledge of the same truths (this is what the Arabs themselves express with the words: *et-tawhîdu wâhidun,* that is to say: "the doctrine of Unity is unique," it is everywhere and always the same); but we recognize that this argument can only hold true for those who admit a truth external to man and independent of his conception, and for whom ideas are something other than mere psychological phenomena. For us, the analogies of methods themselves prove no more: the similarities between Muslim *dhikr* and Hindu *hatha-yoga* are very real and go even further than the author thinks, who seems to have only a rather vague and distant knowledge of these things; But if this is the case, it is because there exists a certain "science of rhythm" that has been developed and applied in all Eastern civilizations, and which, on the other hand, is completely unknown to Westerners. We must also say that Mr. Goldziher seems to know little of Indian doctrines except through the works of Mr. Oltramare, which are practically the only ones he cites on the subject (he even borrows the entirely inappropriate expression "Hindu theosophy" from them); this is truly insufficient, especially since the interpretation presented in these works is judged very harshly by Hindus. It should be added that there is also a footnote mentioning a book by Rama Prasad, a theosophist writer whose authority is completely nil; this footnote is, moreover, written in a rather extraordinary way, but we do not know whether this should be attributed to the author or the translator. Furthermore, many errors should be pointed out, which, though concerning details, are nonetheless important: for example, *et-tasawwuf* is not at all " *the Sufi idea ,"* but rather initiation, which is quite different (see, for instance, the treatise by Mohyiddin ibn Arabi entitled *Tartîbut-tasawwuf,* that is, "The Categories of Initiation"). The few lines devoted to the *Malâmatiyah* give a completely erroneous idea of them; this question, which is little known, nevertheless has considerable implications, and we regret not being able to dwell on it. Many of the most essential concepts of Muslim esotericism are entirely passed over in silence: such is, to limit ourselves to just one example, that of the "Universal Man" *(Al-Insânul-kâmil),* which constitutes the foundation of the esoteric theory of the "manifestation of the

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"Prophet." What is also lacking are at least basic indications of the main schools and the organization of these initiatory Orders that have such a great influence throughout Islam. Finally, we have encountered somewhere the erroneous expression "Muslim occultism": the metaphysical esotericism in question and the sciences related to it as applications have absolutely nothing in common with the more or less bizarre speculations designated as "occultism" in the contemporary Western world.

V. *Sects.* – The author rightly objects to the widespread belief in the existence of a multitude of sects within Islam; in short, the term "sects" should be reserved specifically for heterodox and schismatic branches, the oldest of which is that of the *Kharijites.* The section of the chapter devoted to *Shi'ism*

is quite clear, and some of the misconceptions circulating on this subject are well refuted; but it must also be said that, in reality, the difference between *Sunnis* and *Shiites*
is much less clearly defined, apart from extreme cases, than one might believe from reading this exposition (it is only at the very end of the work that there is a slight allusion to the "numerous degrees of transition that exist between these two forms of Islam"). On the other hand, if the conception of *the Imam* among the *Shiites*
is sufficiently explained (and yet a reservation must be made regarding the deeper meaning it is capable of, because the author does not seem to have a very clear idea of what symbolism is), the same may not be true of that of the *Mahdi* in orthodox Islam; among the theories that have been formulated in this regard, there are some that are of a very high character, and that are much more than "mythological ornaments"; that of Mohyiddin ibn Arabi, in particular, deserves to be at least mentioned.

VI. *Later Formations.* – At the beginning of this last chapter, there is an interpretation of the notion of *Sunna* as “hereditary custom,” which demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of what a tradition truly is, in its essence and its raison d'être. These considerations lead to the study of the modern *Wahhabi sect,* which claims to oppose any innovation contrary to the *Sunna,* and thus presents itself as a restoration of early Islam; but it is probably a mistake to believe these claims justified, for they do not seem to us to be any more so than those of the Protestants in Christianity; there is even more than one curious analogy between the two cases (for example, the rejection of the veneration of saints, which both denounce as “idolatry”). Nor should one attribute excessive importance to certain contemporary movements, such as *Babism,* and especially *Baha'i,* which is derived from it.

Goldziher says by progress, we would rather say by degeneration. The author is truly wrong to take seriously a certain "Americanized" adaptation of *Baha'i,* which has absolutely nothing Muslim or even Oriental about it anymore, and which, in fact, has no more connection with Islam than Vivekananda's false *Vedanta* (which

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We had occasion to mention in our study on Theosophy* that it has nothing to do with true Hindu doctrines: it is merely a kind of quasi-Protestant "moralism." The other sects discussed later belong to India; the most important, the *Sikhs,* are not strictly Muslim, but appear as an attempt to fuse Brahmanism and Islam; at least, that was the position they adopted in their early days. In this last section, we also noted the flawed expressions "Hindu Islam" and "Hindu Muslims": not everything *Indian* is *Hindu* by that very fact, since the latter term designates exclusively what relates to the Brahmanical tradition; there is something more to this than a simple confusion of words.

Naturally, we have mainly pointed out the imperfections in Mr. Goldziher, which is no less likely to render real services, but, we repeat, on the condition that one wants to look for nothing more and nothing other than historical information, and that one is wary of the influence exerted on the whole exposition by the "guiding ideas" that we denounced at the beginning.

Some of the preceding remarks show, moreover, that even from the point of view of factual accuracy, the only one that seems to matter to "historians of religions", pure and simple erudition is not always sufficient; no doubt, it may happen that one gives a faithful expression of ideas that one has not really understood and of which one has only an external and verbal knowledge, but this is a chance on which it would be better not to count too much.

March-April 1922

- **W. Wallace, SJ – *From Evangelicalism to Catholicism by Road from India***

Translated from the English by L. Humblet, SJ. Introduction by Th. Hénusse, SJ. (A volume in-8° of 306 pp. Albert Dewit, Brussels, 1921).

This is a very interesting book from several points of view: first, in a sense that is both religious and psychological, as an autobiography of the author and as a description of the phases he went through that led to his conversion; second, because of the very serious critique it offers of Protestantism, especially regarding its lack of principles and its lack of authority; finally, and this is the

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* [René Guénon published in the *Revue de Philosophie* an abridged version, in 15 chapters, of *Theosophy,* from January to August 1921. The corresponding passage is taken from chapter 17 of this work: Swami Vivekananda “completely distorted the Hindu doctrine of “Vedanta” under the pretext of adapting it to the Western mentality […]. The pseudo-religion invented by Vivekananda […] has nothing of “Vedanta” but the name, for there can be no connection whatsoever between a purely metaphysical doctrine and a sentimental and “consoling” “moralism” which differs from Protestant sermons only in its use of somewhat specialized terminology.”

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which has particularly captured our attention, by the extraordinarily accurate views it contains on the spirit of India and the true meaning of its doctrines.

The author, originally from Northern Ireland, belonged to the "Lower Church," that is, the branch of Anglicanism furthest removed from Catholicism, whose entire creed essentially boils down to this single formula: "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved." Around the age of eighteen, after much effort, W.
Wallace arrived at the "act of faith"; this faith in Christ was never to abandon him thereafter, but it can be said that it was then the only certainty he possessed.
Having entered the Anglican order, after a few years of ministry during which he already experienced "a terrible feeling of powerlessness and sterility," he was sent at his own request as a missionary to Bengal. It was there that, observing the pitiful results achieved by Anglicanism, he discovered that the causes of this failure "were all rooted in a single source: the absence of a supreme and universal Christian authority." The Hindu is astonished by a religion whose final word seems to him to be: "Do as you please," and he judges it inferior to his own, which, as Father Hénusse says in his introduction, "imposes itself both by the high spiritual value of a very clear doctrine and by the venerable authority of a centuries-old tradition." W. Wallace does not hesitate to acknowledge and frankly proclaim this superiority of Hindu doctrine over Anglican Christianity; And it seems that he never shared for a single moment the prejudices of his colleagues, who, without knowing anything about this doctrine, dismissed it outright as unworthy of their

exam.

One already had to be quite unbiased to undertake, under such conditions, a thorough study of Indian doctrines; one had to be even more so, and in a different way, to find what the author found; and it is probably because he was not a professional "Orientalist" that he was able to understand these things. Here, moreover, is his judgment on English translations of Indian sacred books: "Often the translation was so obscure as to be unintelligible, and even where one could understand, the ideas seemed so strange that I could derive practically no benefit from them." It soon became clear to me that English terms could not correspond exactly to the ideas they purported to convey, so that studying the sacred books of the Hindus in English translations was worse than a waste of time… And, after learning Sanskrit well enough to read the texts themselves, “I recognized what I had strongly suspected, that the English language neither conveyed nor could convey the thought of the original, and that translations were only useful in the hands of those who were already familiar with the Hindu way of thinking. Often their use was not merely useless, for not only was the thought neither conveyed nor grasped, but in its place, in the mind of the reader, an absurd counterfeit was established.” This is precisely what we ourselves think in this regard, and this judgment can be extended to all the work of Orientalists in general.

Let us also mention the author's assessment of the Hindus, which is no less accurate: "Besides their natural virtues, I discovered in them thought and..."

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spirituality. They were thinkers, original and religious thinkers, displaying great subtlety and a true power of observation. I am obviously speaking primarily of the Brahmins, but also of the peasants… Many times, their logical strength astonished me, as did the depth of their thought, which, however, seemed quite simple… There is a
Something I can state with certainty: I have never met people with whom it was easier to engage in intellectual dialogue than the Hindus, nor who were more interesting in this kind of conversation, nor who had a greater taste for this sort of discussion… However, it was necessary to learn their metaphysical and religious language and be able to speak in terms that corresponded to their thinking; when we presented them with the formulas of our religious conceptions, they scarcely understood and appreciated them less.
Again. "

As for the very understanding of the ideas and doctrines, “the first fact that shed some light on the matter was the assertion by a native that, in the Hindu religion, everything tended toward achieving ‘absorption’ or ‘ecstasy’ *(samadhi)* as a means of attaining the Supreme Being.” This was an excellent starting point, and it was then easy to realize that the numerous symbolic figures were all arranged in such a way as to be “aids for the concentration of the mind,” which is indeed their essential role. “The Hindus insisted that the idol was merely a convenience, like the symbol x, used by algebraists to denote the unknown quantity… I began to wonder to what extent this worship of created things deserved, for them, the name of idolatry.” For our part, we could state more clearly that there is truly no idolatry here, but we must recognize that this is the first time we have seen this idea expressed by a Westerner, even in a merely doubtful form.

While the author did not achieve a perfect and total assimilation of Hindu thought, he nevertheless went very far in that direction, much further than would be possible with purely theoretical knowledge. We find proof of this in the pages he devotes to *Nirvana,* some passages of which we wish to reproduce: “I consulted dictionaries on this subject, I consulted European authors, I compared Sanskrit books, and I was certain of one thing: it was not what my books described, a pure and simple annihilation. For, as the *Samkhya* said when alluding to this question, the great void cannot be the object of human ambition… I felt that something in the Hindu religion eluded me. I could not grasp it, without knowing why.”

However, one day, as I was meditating on this teaching, this perpetual teaching on *Nirvana* and *Samadhi,* trying to fathom its meaning, God, I think, came to my aid. As if in a flash of lightning, I perceived what these formulas perhaps concealed more than they expressed; I realized, I “realized” the sublime term of Hindu aspiration, this ideal that fascinated every Hindu mind, that influenced every Hindu activity. It was more of an inner illumination than a discovery. It defied all description.” And this true “illumination,” about whose nature it is impossible to be mistaken when one knows what it is about, showed him that Nirvana was not an “absorption in God,” at least not in the sense understood by Westerners who presume to speak of it without knowing anything about it: “It

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There was certainly no extinction of personality, no extinction of being, but rather a *realization of personality* in an absorbing communion of infinite splendor." One could not say it better, and we are the ones who emphasize the words "realization of personality," because they are the very words that we, for our part, have long since adopted as the best expression that Western languages can provide us to render, as far as possible, what is being discussed; there is, most certainly, something more than a simple coincidence here. And Father Wallace then reproduces what he wrote at that time: "Absorbed in a transcendent union, the soul sees only the Supreme, is conscious only of the Supreme… For one who finds himself in the presence of the eternal, nothing seems to remain, except in Him, of this floating phantasmagoria, nothing, not even one's own being which, although it exists in fact – since it knows and infinitely enjoys knowing – is nevertheless not consciously known, so absorbed is it in contemplation. Nothing remains, except this "realization" of the Supreme which transfigures the spirit in itself by an eternal transfiguration… *Nirvana,* at once the abolition of everything and the realization of everything; The abolition of the phantasmagoria of meaning and time, of all those shadows which, whatever our esteem for them, *are not,* whatever they may be, when we "realize" the *One* who *is…* This is not an extinction, but a realization, the realization of the *True* by the *true. "* All the attempts at interpretation by orientalists appear absolutely ludicrous compared to these lines where a man who had acquired something other than "bookish" knowledge tried to describe what he had *seen* "albeit only through transparency, obscurely."

These last words clearly prove that, as we said, he did not go all the way; "but what I had seen, I had seen," he adds, and knowledge of this kind, even if it remains obscure and shrouded, is something that nothing can ever make the one who has acquired it lose. All the Hindus with whom W. Wallace was in contact readily recognized the extent of his progress; by their words and their attitude, they assured him "that he had found it," and one of them said to him, "All that you have of value, you learned from us," which he himself had no difficulty admitting, thinking "that he had received more from India than he could ever give back."

Having understood these things (and there are many other considerations which, despite their interest, we are obliged to pass over in silence), Rev. Wallace could no longer remain what he was: he had by no means lost the Christian faith, but in him "Protestantism had slowly eroded"; so his conversion to Catholicism followed quite closely his return to Europe, after a stay in America which led him to make a comparison between Hindu civilization and Western civilization pushed to the extreme, a comparison which was not to the advantage of the latter.
There were, however, still some struggles at the time of his conversion, and even at the beginning of his novitiate in the Society of Jesus: what was presented to him seemed "small" and "narrow" compared to what he knew; he did not encounter any difficulties of a purely positive nature, but he was required to make denials that probably stemmed primarily from a certain misunderstanding on the part of his spiritual directors, and various passages show that he must have later realized that

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The alleged opposition and incompatibility of Hindu and Catholic conceptions were non-existent: does he not write that the *Sanatana Dharma* (the "eternal law" of the Hindus) is the natural "pedagogue leading to Christ", and does he not express regret that "Catholics do not fully realize this"? "The *Sanatana Dharma* of the Hindu sages," we read elsewhere, "as I now understood it, proceeded from exactly the same principle as the Christian religion."

However, it was an attempt to execute each for themselves, in isolation, what Christ, according to my belief, had executed for all of us, in a universal way. There was rivalry; there was no antagonism." It is already a great deal to have recognized this; very few Westerners have understood it, and perhaps even fewer have dared to proclaim it; but we can go further and say that there is not even rivalry, because, if the *principle* is indeed the same, the *point of view* is not. Here we touch upon the essential point on which Father Wallace's understanding of Hindu doctrines remained imperfect: namely, that he could not help but interpret them in a "religious" sense, according to the Western understanding of this word; We need not inquire whether this aspect, by which his mind remained Western despite everything, was not what stopped him on the path of "realization" that he had so clearly glimpsed; but what is certain is that this is what led him to make certain confusions, notably regarding the idea of *moksha* and that of "salvation" as identical, and to say that Christianity made accessible to all the very ideal that Hinduism could only offer to an elite. Despite this reservation, which truth compels us to express, Father Wallace's book remains for us a testimony of exceptional value and importance, and we have had the great satisfaction of finding in it, on many points, a striking confirmation of what we ourselves think and say about India and its doctrines.

November-December 1923

- **Augustin Périer –** Yahyâ ben Adî: a ***10th-*** century ***Arab Christian philosopher – Short apologetic treatises by Yahyâ ben Adî***

(Two volumes in-8° of 228 and 136 pp., J. Gabalda and P. Geuthner, Paris, 1920).

The biggest criticism we have of Father Périer's work is that it really has a bit too much of the appearance of a "thesis," in the academic sense of the word; it is one, indeed, but is it really necessary for the presentation to suffer from it to such an extent? This can only harm a work which, by the undeniable interest of the information it provides on a little-known subject, nevertheless deserves not to go unnoticed.

The work of Yahyâ ben Adî, at least in what has survived to this day (for his many purely philosophical treatises are unfortunately lost),

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It appears primarily as a use of Aristotelian doctrine for apologetic purposes. What is curious, moreover, is that at that time, all the Muslim schools and all the Christian sects (Jacobites, Melkites, Nestorians, and others) claimed to be based equally on Aristotle, in whom each believed it found confirmation of its particular theories. Mr. Périer believes that "it is in the continuation of the School of Alexandria that we must look for the point of convergence between Aristotelianism and Arabic philosophy"; this is a question that might be interesting to examine more closely.

After an overview of the philosophical ideas of Yahyâ ben Adî as they emerge from fragments that are rather incoherent in their current state, Mr.
Périer provides a very detailed analysis, with extensive excerpts, of his major theological treatises: the *Treatise on Unity,* the *Treatise on the Trinity ,* and the *Treatise on the Incarnation or Union.* This section, which we cannot possibly summarize here, is by far the most important; the dialectical methods employed by the Arab philosopher to respond to the objections of his critics are quite remarkable and often highly original.

We would like to offer a minor criticism: Mr. Périer has not understood what Arabs, both Muslim and Christian, mean by "universal man" (which is not at all "the human species," nor is it an "abstraction"); and he finds "childish," precisely because he fails to understand it, a concept of such profound metaphysical significance. And why does he see fit, in this regard, to profess a certain disdain for "scholastic subtleties," and to allow a "nominalism" to show through, a notion entirely unrelated to the role of historian to which he intended to confine himself?

The second volume comprises the text and translation of eight short apologetic treatises by Yahyâ ben Adî, plus the translation alone of a ninth treatise. We can only pay tribute to the arduous task undertaken by Mr. Périer to edit a text, for the first time, from very defective manuscripts.
As for his French translation, he says "that he has striven to make it *faithful* and *clear ,"* and it seems to us that he has succeeded very well.

Baron **Carra de Vaux – *The Thinkers of Islam – I. The Sovereigns, History and Political Philosophy – II. The Geographers, Mathematical and Natural Sciences***

(Two volumes in-16° of 384 and 400 pp., P. Geuthner, Paris, 1921).

These volumes are the first two in a series intended to comprise five, aiming to provide a comprehensive overview of Muslim intellectual life across all its fields of activity. "We wanted," the author states, "not to create a catalogue, but a selection. Our intention was not to include everything, but to highlight the principal figures, to present the major works, to convey a sense of some essential ideas, and to offer a glimpse into certain aspects."

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summits." The need for such a work was indeed greatly felt, providing the necessary guidance to recognize oneself among the multitude of detailed works in which orientalists usually indulge.

The overall title is open to criticism, as it does not seem entirely accurate; at least the word "thinkers" is used in a very broad sense. This can be seen from the subheadings: the figures discussed so far, with a few exceptions, are not thinkers in the usual sense; no doubt the use of this word will be more justified in the volumes that follow. In any case, there are some very interesting expositions here, particularly in the second volume, which is especially important with regard to the history of science. In Europe, we are not sufficiently aware of all that we owe to the Arabs, through whom a large part of the knowledge of antiquity was preserved and transmitted, not to mention all that they themselves added, particularly in the field of mathematics. This is what emerges very clearly from this work, in which the author demonstrates considerable impartiality. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said when the question of origins arises: he claims that Arab science was inspired almost exclusively by Greek science, which is truly excessive. That the last Neoplatonists took refuge in Persia, and that from there they exerted some influence on the Muslim world, is quite plausible; but ultimately, there was more, and even in Persia itself, Zoroastrianism was not a negligible element (let us also note, in this regard, the all-too-commonly ignored fact that Muslims honor Zoroaster as a prophet). In astronomy, the Persians undoubtedly owed much more to the Chaldeans than to the Greeks; and, on the other hand, it does not seem to us that the Arab sect of the Sabians, which produced many scholars in the first four centuries of Islam, can be considered as properly linked to Neoplatonism.

Moreover, wasn't this culture, in essence, more oriental than Greek in many respects, and wasn't that precisely why the Orientals readily welcomed its representatives among them? But it is especially when it comes to India that the bias becomes all too obvious: when the Arabs themselves apply the epithet " *Hindi" to something,* "it doesn't matter," and it suffices that Indian influence "is not evident" for it to be resolutely dismissed, while, on the other hand, the most insignificant coincidences are used to support Greek influence. There would be much to say on certain points, such as the origin of numerals, that of algebra, the question of astronomical periods, and also, for China, the invention of the compass; but we cannot dwell on them further.

Let us add just one final remark: it is, to say the least, peculiar to present the Mughal emperor Akbar as "one of the fathers of modern theosophy"; however unorthodox this sovereign's religious syncretism may have been, he truly did not deserve this insult, for it is indeed one, even though the author does not seem to consider it as such at all. But these various reservations, which do not ultimately concern the most essential points, should not cause us to overlook the real value of a very conscientiously produced work that can be of great service.

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Baron **Carra de Vaux** – ***The Thinkers of Islam – III. Exegesis, Tradition and Jurisprudence****

(A vol. in-16 of 424 pp., P. Geuthner, Paris, 1923).

We have already spoken here (November-December 1923 issue) of the first two volumes of this work; we can, with regard to the third, repeat what we said then: this work is destined to render great services to those who, without having the time or the possibility of engaging in multiple research, wish to form an overall idea of Muslim intellectuality.

Despite the subtitle, most of the third volume is actually devoted to a historical summary of the origins of Islam, where unfortunately the flaws and prejudices inherent in the mentality of our time appear.
Reading certain pages, such as those discussing whether the Quran has always been a "book" (pp. 156-163), would be advisable for those tempted to take the results of modern "criticism" too seriously. It is also worth noting the admission that a religious interpretation "has no meaning for criticism" (p. 158); could we not reverse the proposition and say just as well that "critical" arguments have no meaning for anyone adopting a religious or, more generally, traditional perspective? Indeed, "criticism," understood in this way, has fundamentally never been anything other than a weapon of anti-religious warfare; those who believe they should adopt a more or less conciliatory and "opportunistic" attitude toward it are victims of a very dangerous illusion.

Let us turn to some more detailed observations; and, first of all, let us regret that the author quite often writes "Mahometan" instead of "Muslim"; the word is undoubtedly in common use among Europeans, but it is nonetheless incorrect for many reasons. Another inaccuracy, and a more serious one, is that of speaking of Islam, or even of the Arab world, as a "nationality."

– Retaining a sentence that one recognizes as erroneous, under the pretext that it “sounds good literary” (p. 100), seems frivolous and risks discrediting a work that, nevertheless, is better than that overall. – There are also some more or less questionable assertions, such as the one attributing an exclusively Persian origin to the coat of arms (p. 10); is it not known that, from antiquity, it also existed elsewhere than in the East, notably among the Celtic peoples? – Before mocking a tradition that mentions “giants” (p. 78), it would be wise to know that this word and its equivalents were very generally used to designate powerful men, warlike and conquering peoples, without any regard to their actual stature. – Let us also note an error concerning the term *nabî*

(prophet) and *rasûl* (legislator), whose hierarchical relationship is reversed (p. 153), and a poorly justified opinion, to say the least, on the meaning of the letters which are placed at the beginning of some surahs of the Quran (p. 176).

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* [Unpublished. Date of writing and planned publication number not provided.]

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The last chapters contain good expositions on the tradition *(hadith),* on jurisprudence, and finally on commentaries on the Quran.

• Lothrop Stoddard – *The New World of Islam*

Translated from English by Abel Doysié (One volume in-8° of 323 pp., Payot, Paris, 1923).

Although this work deals primarily with political and social issues, it is also interesting from other perspectives. The author, let us state immediately, is far from impartial: he is imbued with all the prejudices of the West in general, and those of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism in particular; he reiterates all the common clichés about "obscurantism" and "progress"; he finds praise only for what appears to him, rightly or wrongly, to have a tinge of "puritanism" or "rationalism"; and he has a tendency, quite natural under these circumstances, to exaggerate the importance of the role of "liberal reformers" and especially that of Western influence. He mistakes for an "elite" those rare Europeanized elements who, from an Eastern perspective, are quite the opposite, and, all too often, superficial appearances prevent him from seeing the deeper reality, which he is, moreover, very likely incapable of grasping. Indeed, one can get a sufficient idea of his absolute lack of intellectuality (a very American flaw) from these two examples: the purely metaphysical doctrines of certain Arab schools are for him nothing but "superstition and childish mysticism", and traditional teaching, based on the study of sacred texts, is "an ineptitude that petrifies the intelligence"!

However, this book is worth reading because it is generally well-informed; it is therefore regrettable that the author, instead of adhering to a presentation of the facts, constantly mixes in biased opinions, compounded by a multitude of insulting, or at least offensive, epithets directed at Orientals. There are, concerning English policy in the East during these last few years, a number of truths that would be extremely useful to disseminate. Perhaps the most interesting part of the work is that devoted to "nationalism"; it clearly illustrates the difference in the ideas that this same word is used to designate, depending on whether one is referring to the West or the East; on the relationship between "nationality" and "race," there are also noteworthy considerations, although they lack a certain precision.

Let us add that the title does not accurately reflect the work as a whole, for it deals not only with the current situation in the Muslim world, but also with that of India; this study thus encompasses what might be called the Near and Middle East. The author is very cautious in his conclusions, which is entirely commendable; he carefully refrains from making any predictions about the future course of events. Finally, despite his evident bias, he cannot help but acknowledge that, if certain dangers threaten the West, the West bears a large share of the responsibility.

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The translation is so literal as to be sometimes incorrect, and it is marred by linguistic oddities that could easily have been avoided. For example, in French, one doesn't say "bribe" but "corruption" or "venality"; one doesn't say "paper" but "article" on such and such a subject; "practically" is not always translated as "pratiquement," and so on. There is also a confusion between "Indian" and "Hindu," the source of which—whether the author or the translator—is unknown. And, since we are on the subject of form, it is somewhat ridiculous in France, if not in America, to give the last war the apocalyptic name of "Armageddon."

• Louis Finot – *The walk in the Light (Bodhicharyavatara)*

Sanskrit poem by Çântideva; French translation with introduction (One volume in-8vo of 168 pp. Collection of Classics of the Orient; Bossard, Paris, 1920)

Bodhi , a term somewhat loosely translated as "Light" but which more accurately evokes the idea of "Wisdom," is "the supreme Illumination that reveals to the Buddha the law of the universe"; the path to *Bodhi* is therefore "the sum of spiritual exercises that lead the future Buddha toward his goal." Çântideva's treatise, quite apart from its poetic merits, is very well suited to conveying an idea of the *Mahayana* or "Great Vehicle" Buddhist asceticism, which proposes as its goal "the ideal state of Buddha, savior of the world," while the *Hinayâna* or "Lesser Vehicle" is content to lead its followers to the peace of *Nirvâna.* It also offers, especially in its later chapters, an excellent example of the specific dialectic of the *Madhyamika school,* to which its author belonged, who is believed to have lived around the 7th century.

e century of the Christian era.

A French translation of the *Bodhicharyavatara* already existed , by M. de la Vallée-Poussin, published in 1905-1907 in the *Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature religieuses.* "This translation," says M. Finot in his introduction, "places doctrinal explanation at the forefront and deliberately sacrifices concision, which is the principal merit of Çântideva's style." Finot himself chose to adopt a different, more literary perspective; but one might wonder whether, in striving to preserve the concision of the original, he has not introduced a degree of obscurity into his version; and it is unfortunate that he did not at least deem it necessary to include more explanatory notes to compensate for the inadequacy of the French words, which often correspond only very approximately to the Sanskrit terms. It is not by scrupulously copying the translation from the text that one can best render its spirit, especially when it is an Eastern text; and is it not to be feared that, under these conditions, the essence of the thought will escape most readers? Finally, even when one intends to address simply the "literate public," and whatever disdain one may suppose them to have for "theological questions," is it really legitimate to give more importance to form than to content?

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• Émile Senart – *The Bhagavad-Gita*

Translated from Sanskrit with an introduction (One volume in-8° of 174 pp. Collection of Classics of the Orient; Bossard, Paris, 1922)

Of all Hindu texts, the *Bhagavad Gita* is certainly one of the best known in Europe, one of those most frequently translated and commented upon in various languages. This dialogue between Krishna and his disciple Arjuna is known to be a fragment of the *Mahabharata,* one of the two great epics of ancient India.
Some have sought to see in it the expression of what is highest and deepest in Hindu doctrines, which is an exaggeration: whatever the authority and scope of this book, it cannot be placed on the same level as the *Upanishads ;* it presents, in truth, only one aspect of the doctrine, but an aspect which is no less worthy of being studied with the greatest attention.

What strikes us as odd here is the translator's mindset. He begins by declaring that he "stops at the threshold of the sanctuary," and then confesses to being "profane" with unusual eagerness. Ideas and their truth clearly don't interest him; how then could he have mustered the courage, under these circumstances, to undertake and complete such a work? For him, no doubt, it was simply a philological exercise; the mentality of certain "specialists" is truly disconcerting! And isn't there also something here of that curious prejudice according to which only those who limit themselves to considering a doctrine "from the outside" are qualified to study it "scientifically"? Nevertheless, among the somewhat confused considerations gathered in the introduction, there are a few that are quite accurate: for example, the assertion of the "encyclopedic" character of the Hindu epic, although some clarification should be added regarding how the traditional sciences are understood; and also the remark that "much more than by rigorous deductions, Hindu thought proceeds by intuitions and partial classifications," which, moreover, are not classifications in the strict sense, but rather what we would readily call "correspondences." An interesting point is this: certain passages of the *Bhagavad-Gita* can be linked to the concepts of *Vedanta,* others to those of *Sankhya ;* For those who see here two more or less rival and incompatible "systems," such a fact is inexplicable, unless one resorts to the theory of "interpolation," which is the great resource of "historical criticism," and which Mr. Senart, to his credit, does not hesitate to call "an expedient too convenient not to be initially somewhat suspect." As for himself, he at least glimpsed that these are not "systems," but rather "points of view," and that is already a great deal; but, failing to grasp the harmony of these "points of view" within the overall unity of the doctrine, he believed he was faced with an "inconsistent and scattered thought," whereas, on the contrary, its fundamental characteristics, its dominant notes, so to speak, are "concentration" and "identity."

As for the translation itself, it is undoubtedly less pleasant to read than Burnouf's, but it has, on the other hand, the great advantage of being more precise;
Burnouf, in fact, had the skill to sidestep the difficulties and avoid

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Many misinterpretations are made by remaining vague. Mr. Senart has not only rendered certain words better than those his predecessor translated inadequately or inaccurately; he has also, and rightly so, retained in their Sanskrit form "terms for which we lack even approximate equivalents." One might regret that he did not include a glossary explaining these terms at the end of his work; however, the few notes at the bottom of the pages suggest that he was better off omitting it: philology and the interpretation of ideas are two very different things, and when one has chosen to confine oneself to a "specialty," it is wise to refrain from seeking to deviate from it. The Sanskrit terms will help those familiar with Hindu thought to grasp the precise meaning of the text; as for others, even if they do not understand everything, this is still preferable to acquiring false or distorted notions.

• Louis Finot – *Milinda's Questions (Milinda-pañha)*

Translated from Pali with introduction and notes (One volume in-8° of 166 pp. Collection of Classics of the Orient; Bossard, Paris, 1923)

This book, already translated into English by Rhys Davids, consists of a series of dialogues between King Milinda and the Buddhist monk Nagasena; Milinda is the Greek king Menander, who reigned in Sagala, in the Punjab, around the 2nd century BC; and he clearly shows, in his questions, all the subtlety of the Greek character.
The discussion covers the most diverse points of Buddhist doctrine, among which there are some of very unequal importance; but, as a whole, this text is certainly, in its kind, one of the most interesting that exist.

Is it because Mr. Finot was not preoccupied this time with the idea he had in translating a poem? In any case, his translation seemed to us clearer than that of the *March to Light ;* he also added more abundant notes, and he took care to indicate, for technical terms, their Pali equivalents; we only regret that he only exceptionally gave the corresponding Sanskrit forms.

In the same collection, which is very well edited, we should also mention, for those interested in Buddhism, two other works: **Three Tibetan Mysteries*,* translated with an introduction, notes, and index by Jacques Bacot (1 vol. *in-8*° of 300 pp., 1921), and * *Tales and Legends of Chinese Buddhism*,* translated by Édouard Chavannes, with a preface and glossary by Sylvain Lévi (1 vol. *in-8*° of 220 pp., 1921). Although these stories were presented with purely literary intentions, they actually have, like all those of the same kind found in the East, a deeper meaning for those who know how to grasp their symbolism instead of stopping at their outward forms, however seductive they may be.

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January-February 1924

• P. Masson-Oursel – *Outline of a History of Philosophy Indian*

(A volume in-8° of 314 pp. P. Geuthner, Paris, 1923).

In his introduction, the author states his intention to "pay the most vigilant attention to the interpretations that the East considers classical," and he even acknowledges that "our scholars, well-versed in the practice of criticism, whether historical or philological, display a systematic aversion, not without bias, toward indigenous traditions." This is all very well; but then why, in the body of his work, does he consider little more than the more or less questionable results of European criticism? And, having begun by denouncing the "superstition of chronology," why allow himself to be interrupted in the exposition of a doctrine by the preoccupation with following a chronology that is often hypothetical, to the great detriment of the logical flow of ideas? It is probably because, even with the best will in the world, it is very difficult to rid oneself of the mental habits imposed by a certain education.

The best part of the work, the most accurate and complete, is certainly, as one would expect, the part concerning Buddhism.
The author even very rightly corrects the "pessimistic" interpretations that have been circulating since Schopenhauer; but he greatly exaggerates the originality of this doctrine, in which he would even like to see something other than the deviation from Brahmanism that it is in reality. What he also exaggerates is the influence of Buddhism on the subsequent development of Hindu doctrines: no doubt, the need to respond to certain objections often leads to clarifying the expression of one's own thought; but this influence, in a way negative, the only one that we can recognize in Buddhism, is not the one attributed to it here.

The exposition of the orthodox *darshanas* did not strike us as very clear, and moreover, it is presented from a rather superficial perspective; we do not believe that the bias of seeking "evolution" everywhere is compatible with a true understanding of certain ideas. The same observation applies to what is commonly called "Hinduism," which is presented as the product of elements originally foreign to Brahmanism, to which the latter supposedly adapted as best it could, so that the *Trimurti* itself would be nothing more than an almost modern invention! The underlying reasons for the distinction between Vaishnavism and Shaivism are not even glimpsed; but this question, like that of origins, risks leading us far astray. There would also be much to say about *yoga,* which could never consist of a "pragmatist" attitude: how could this word be appropriate where the very aim is to free oneself from action?

Finally, let us point out a strangely inaccurate notion of what magic is and, above all, what it is not; a "mage" and a "magician" are not quite the same thing.

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thing, no more than a "seer" and a "visionary"; and translating *rishi* as "visionary" seems to us an unfortunate oversight.

Generally speaking, Indian doctrines are diminished here, so to speak, precisely because of the twofold perspective from which they are considered: first, a historical perspective, which foregrounds questions of little real importance; and second, a philosophical perspective, which is quite inadequate to the subject at hand and utterly incapable of getting to the heart of the matter, of reaching the very essence of the doctrines in question. "Philosophy is philosophy everywhere," we are told; but is there really philosophy everywhere? We will at least be granted that there is more to the world than that; and we are not entirely sure that some Indologists "were well-adjusted to have possessed from the outset a European philosophical background"; in any case, we, for our part, have only had reason to congratulate ourselves on having been able, on the contrary, to become acquainted with the doctrines of the East before studying Western philosophy.

• P. Masson-Oursel – *Comparative Philosophy*

(1 vol. in-8° of 204 pp. F. Alcan, Paris, 1923).

In this second work, which is less "special" than the previous one, Mr. Masson-Oursel presents considerations on the "comparative method" applied to philosophy, to which it alone can, according to him, give a "positive" basis.
This notion of "positivity" seems rather ambiguous, and the meaning in which it is understood here is probably quite different from that given to it by Auguste Comte; and yet, perhaps it could be defined, in general terms, by the bias of attributing a preponderant importance to "facts": "The fundamental principle of a truly positive philosophy must be the firm intention of grasping philosophical facts in history, and only in history." However, we are then assured that "the immanence of the philosophical given in history does not imply that the positive method in philosophy is reduced to the historical method"; the difference must lie above all in the intention, which here is "to understand better as we know more"; but understand what? The workings of the human mind, no doubt, and nothing more or other, for it does not seem that the question of the truth or falsity of ideas in themselves is ever raised.

The principle of "comparative philosophy" must be analogy; the considerations relating to it are, moreover, hardly new, but the author does not seem to know how scholasticism used it, which is hardly surprising when one sees him attributing the distinction between essence and existence to Cartesianism! We can only approve of his not "exaggerating the value of classifications of systems" and of writing things like these: "Comparative philosophy finds only a caricature of what it should become in these classifications of systems under so many terms ending in *-ism,* pure barbarisms not only in letter, but in spirit." But has he himself always

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well guarded from any superficial or insufficiently justified comparison? Although terms like "sophistic" and "scholastic" do not end in *-ism,* the extension he gives them is perhaps no less excessive.

The second part of the work is devoted to several examples of the application of the "comparative method." Regarding "comparative chronology" (which we are carefully warned is often only approximate), we will say only one thing: it is hardly possible for us to accept the "synchronicity" of the three civilizations taken as "reference points"—those of Europe, India, and China. It is true that Western "criticism" probably considers itself very broad in not further reducing the antiquity it chooses to attribute to Eastern civilizations. The chapter devoted to "comparative logic" contains much more interesting considerations, but for lack of space, we cannot attempt to summarize them here. As for "comparative metaphysics," to discuss it properly, one must first understand what metaphysics truly is, and not mistake it for an "ideal improvisation," nor attribute to it a "pragmatist" origin, nor confuse it with mysticism. Finally, regarding "comparative psychology," we entirely agree with the author that psychologists have hitherto made the serious mistake of limiting their research to a very restricted field and of overgeneralizing results that are valid only for that field; however, we are convinced that there are things that, by their very nature, will always elude psychological investigation, and that, in particular, neither the mystical nor the metaphysical realm will ever fall under its sway.

We would add that "comparative philosophy" appears to us less as a comparison of *philosophies* than as a *philosophical* comparison of ideas and doctrines of all kinds, philosophical or otherwise, since we refuse to mistake for "universal thought" what is merely a modality of thought. Certainly, one always has the right to adopt a philosophical perspective to consider anything, which may in itself have nothing philosophical about it; but one would have to know how far this approach allows one to push the understanding, and, when it comes to the doctrines of India and China, we have many reasons to think that it cannot go very far. It is true that this could at least be sufficient to improve the teaching of philosophy, the conclusion of which contains a very valid critique in many respects. But why, after proposing to introduce "data from the history of religions," is there a need to immediately add that this will not "compromise the independence of secular thought"? What sensitivities or anxieties does the mere word "religion" arouse in academic circles? And could it be that they forget that the "history of religions" was invented precisely to serve eminently "secular"—we mean anti-religious —purposes?

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• Arthur and Ellen Avalon – *Hymns to the Goddess*

(translated from Sanskrit with introduction and notes. – 1 vol. in-16° of 80 pp. Petite Collection Orientaliste, Bossard, Paris, 1923).

Sir John Woodroffe was an Englishman who, quite unusually, took a genuine interest in Indian doctrines, and who, under the pseudonym Arthur Avalon, published numerous works in which he aimed to introduce Tantrism, that is, one of the aspects of these doctrines most completely unknown to the European public. The one of these works whose French translation has just been published
The forthcoming collection (and we must hope that others will follow) contains eight hymns from diverse origins, but which share the common characteristic of viewing the Divine from a feminine perspective. We will reproduce here only an excerpt from the introduction: “The Supreme Cause is regarded as a mother because she conceives the universe within herself through the divine Imagination *(Kalpanâ)* of the Great Self *(Pûrnâham),* carries it and brings it into being, nourishes and protects it with a truly maternal tenderness. She is the Power or *Shakti* of Being, the Heart of the Supreme Lord. She and He are the dual aspect of the One Reality; eternal, immutable in itself, as *Shiva ;* God in action as *Shakti* or Power, and as such, the cause of all change, omnipresent in the countless forms of individuals and things subject to change… The worship of the Mother is very ancient.” It already belonged to the most remote Mediterranean civilization… It is not, as some authors have claimed, a religious form limited to a sect.

This small volume is illustrated with numerous drawings by Mr. Jean Buhot, based on Hindu documents, which are of the greatest interest for the study of iconographic symbolism; and it should be noted that this symbolism has a role of paramount importance in the doctrine in question.

May-June 1925

• Eugène Tavernier – *Fifty Years of Politics: The Work of irreligion*

A small octavo volume of 368 pp. Spes Editions, Paris, 1925.

At the very moment this work was about to be published, the author's fifty years of journalism were being celebrated; this is to say that it is the account of a witness who was able to follow, as they unfolded, all the events whose causes he has endeavored to show here and whose sequence of events he has sought to reveal. What he presents to us is a striking history of the religious struggles that, in France, have lasted for almost half a century without interruption; religious struggles is indeed the appropriate term, for politics proper has never played the essential role in them. What dominates all the debates during this period is what is called "anticlericalism."

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which is in reality only a mask of pure and simple irreligion, as Mr. Viviani clearly admitted long ago in a speech from which this quote serves as the epigraph to the book: "We have all devoted ourselves to a work of irreligion."

But this work had been prepared long in advance: the state of mind from which it stems is anything but spontaneous: and that is why Mr. Tavernier begins by devoting a study to each of those whom he very rightly calls the "doctors," philosophers and historians who were, directly or indirectly, the educators of the politicians who came to power from 1871 onwards: Auguste Comte1 Proudhon, Renan, Taine, Michelet, Quinet, Berthelot, then the founders of the newspaper *Le Temps* (these pages were first published in this very journal) and of the *Revue des Deux-Mondes2*

Perhaps some will be surprised to see in this list the names of some men who are sometimes presented to them in a different light, because of their more or less pronounced opposition to revolutionary ideas in the political field; but, from a religious point of view, their influence was no less harmful than that of the others, and the texts cited establish this in an indisputable way; anyone who refuses to subordinate religion to politics will certainly judge it as such.

Substituting man for God—that, in short, is the fundamental and dominant thought of all these "doctors," when stripped of all the more or less subtle nuances with which it is cloaked; and this is also what all the politicians who drew inspiration from their spirit have striven to achieve practically in French society. Thus, the program of anti-religious struggles that were to lead to this goal through successive stages was entirely predetermined from the outset; Mr. Tavernier proves this with extracts from Gambetta's speeches and other equally irrefutable documents; and all the cunning of "opportunism," its "double-speak," its tactics of dissimulation and equivocation, cannot prevent this truth from coming to light. Has not Mr. Viviani publicly acknowledged that school neutrality "was always a lie," which, moreover, was "perhaps a necessary lie"? Is it not indeed necessary to deceive public opinion in order to gradually lead it to accept the "reforms" decided upon in advance? And the question of education is not merely a typical example here; it occupies the foremost place in the "work of irreligion," and this is understandable, since it is primarily a matter of systematically distorting the general mentality, destroying certain conceptions and imposing others, which can only be done through education directed in a clearly defined direction. Thus, the chapters devoted to the stages of secularization, to the

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[1] We will allow ourselves to point out two slight inaccuracies concerning the famous "law of three stages": what Comte calls the "theological stage" is subdivided for him into three secondary phases, fetishism, polytheism and monotheism, so that one cannot say that "theological stage" and "fetishistic stage" are equivalent in his eyes; on the other hand, the "metaphysical stage", according to the bizarre meaning he gives to this word, is not represented by Catholicism, but on the contrary by everything that has a negative and destructive character, and in particular by the Reformation and the Revolution.

[2] The list could have been even longer; it is a shame that it does not include the theorists of "evolutionism" in all its forms, nor the promoters of the so-called "science of religions", with the exception of Renan who can be linked to both of these two groups.

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"Neutrality" and "Godless school" are among the most important, and they abound in specific and significant facts; this cannot be summarized, and moreover, for all those who want to be fully edified in this regard, this very instructive book is to be read in its entirety.

After preparing and implementing the program, here are the results: "The Ruins" is the title Mr. Tavernier gives to the final section, where he describes the state of "a people ravaged by their own hands," by a kind of collective aberration of which one would find few examples in history. These ruins are of all kinds, from "the great pity of the churches of France," to use Barrès's expression, to the "moral ruins" of which striking examples are found here in the most diverse fields: corruption of literature and administration, destruction of the family and of patriotism. And, to top it all off, we have a picture of what higher education at the University has become since the "sociological school," of which Durkheim was the leader, came to reign supreme: "society proceeding from itself and itself alone and worshipping itself, practical sociology becoming organized sociolatry," this is what is offered to us as the ultimate outcome of these fifty years of trials and disappointments!

All this the "liberals" were unable to prevent because, however honest their intentions may have been, their principles were flawed and fundamentally no different from those of their adversaries themselves, because they always forgot "that liberty neither subsists nor defends itself by its own strength alone, that it needs truth, from which it cannot free itself without utterly ruining itself." Let us quote again these lines from the conclusion: "In 1833, Lacordaire wrote to Montalembert: 'Do you know if this liberalism that pleases you so much will not give rise to the most appalling despotism?' Twenty years later, Proudhon wrote this formula which, a marvel of deceit and cynicism, deserves to be preserved for posterity: 'Catholicism must at this moment be pursued to the point of extinction; which does not prevent me from writing on my flag: Tolerance.'" This is the unbelievable absurdity that has filled half a century.

After all this, one question remains for us: this overall, perfectly coherent plan, whose realization we see unfolding little by little in all its successive phases, who first established and desired it? Politicians, of rather mediocre intelligence for the most part, are clearly only simple executors; but are their inspirers, from the representatives of the philosophy in vogue under the Second Empire to current sociologists, the true authors and holders of this plan, did they conceive it on their own initiative, or on the contrary are they themselves only instruments, dominated and directed, perhaps without their knowledge, by a hidden will that imposes itself on them, and then on others through them? We are only posing this question, which is undoubtedly very difficult to resolve in a precise and definitive way (because it is obvious that in such a case one cannot rely on any written text and that only clues of a more subtle order can guide the research), but which, for this very reason, deserves to be examined very closely and with the greatest attention.

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January-February 1936

- **Nyoiti Sakurazawa – *Unique Principle of Philosophy and Far Eastern Science***

(J. Vrin Philosophical Bookstore, Paris).

The author of this small volume wanted to provide "a key to the philosophy and science of the Far East," which, in truth, and as he himself acknowledges, are not precisely "philosophy" and "science" in the Western sense of these words.
This “key,” which he calls “universal law,” is the cosmological doctrine of the two complementary principles, *yin* and *yang,* whose oscillations and vicissitudes produce all manifested things. Indeed, there are many consequences and applications to be drawn from this doctrine, without, however, departing from the essentially “synthetic” perspective to which one must always maintain if one wishes to remain faithful to the spirit of traditional Far Eastern teaching. But those presented here amount to very little, and, especially in the “scientific” section, are unfortunately mixed with modern Western conceptions, which take us far from authentic “traditional sciences.” These comparisons between things of such different orders have always seemed rather futile to us, for even where apparent similarities may be found, there is in reality no possible assimilation; the points of view are and will always remain radically different. There is some confusion in the presentation, perhaps due in part to the introduction of these considerations of a "mixed" nature, to which one could, without too much injustice, apply what the author says about the current state of his country, which "has lost the true oriental spirit, without having been able to gain the true western spirit"; and some rather regrettable imperfections in language further contribute to accentuating this impression.

- **Mrs Rhys Davids – *The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon – Part. I. Dhamenapada: Verses on Dhamena, and Khuddaka-Pâtha: The Text of the Minor Sayings***

(Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, London).

This volume, which is part of the *Sacred Books of the Buddhists collection,* contains the text and translation opposite each other; its main feature is that some parts are printed in smaller type; these are the parts that are supposed to have been "interpolated", added or modified at a more recent time.
In a lengthy introduction, the translator explains her intentions: she has set herself the task of reconstructing what she believes to have been original Buddhism, which she has chosen to call *Sakya ;* and, to do so, she strives above all to eliminate anything that appears to her to have a "monastic" character; perhaps the only conclusion that should be drawn from this is simply that she herself has a particularly strong "anti-monastic" prejudice.

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Violent! She also considers as "late" anything that seems to indicate an influence of *Sankhya ;* but it's truly unclear why this influence couldn't have been exerted just as effectively on Buddhism from its very beginnings… In short, her *Sakya* is little more than another hypothetical construct, added to all those already erected by other "historians," each according to their own individual tendencies and preferences. As for the translation itself, it could certainly have been more precise and clearer had it not been in verse; whatever one might say, we believe that a verse translation always presents far fewer advantages than disadvantages, especially since it is quite impossible to preserve the true rhythm of the original in another language.

• E. Steinilber-Oberlin – *Japanese Buddhist Sects*

(Published by G. Crès et Cie , Paris).

This book presents itself as a "philosophical inquiry," which might lead one to fear that it is more or less influenced by Western viewpoints; but, in truth, the author, with regard to the history and doctrines of the various sects or schools, mostly confines himself to reporting, in an impartial and seemingly accurate manner, what the Buddhist professors he consulted told him. This account shows that Buddhism, in Japan as in other countries where it spread, has largely changed to adapt to its environment; the earliest sects, which remained closer to the Indian and Chinese forms, did not survive. It is also evident that the sects currently tending toward the greatest expansion are those that most simplify the doctrine and exhibit the most pronounced "quietist" character. These are, unsurprisingly, the very texts that primarily demonstrate a tendency toward "modernization" and a predominant "social" concern—all of which are clearly closely linked to the "Westernization" of contemporary Japan. This is the general impression one gets from this book, in which those who are not "specialists" will find sufficient information, including excerpts from some key texts. It is also easy to read and, moreover, abundantly illustrated with views of the main Japanese Buddhist shrines.

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Published in *Just Released*

February 1926

• Jules L'Agneau – *On the Existence of God*

Jules Lagneau, who never wrote anything but was given a reputation as an extraordinary philosopher, has finally had a small book published, based on his students' notebooks, presented to us as his "philosophical testament"; and, upon reading it, we are somewhat surprised by this reputation. What we see here is a philosophy professor steeped in Kantianism, as almost all of them were some thirty years ago; he accepts Kant's position, in its entirety, as something beyond question, and he simply seeks to perfect the so-called "moral proof" of God's existence.

To this end, he relies on a certain conception of freedom; this freedom, moreover, "it is impossible for thought to prove itself to itself other than through moral action"; and, through this action, "God is realized in us," for this act consists "in making the law true by willing it to be so." It is not, moreover, a question of existence in the strict sense, nor even of pure being, but of a "duty to be," a "value," an "ideal," etc. Does all this truly have meaning and does it prove anything? It is certainly curious, from a psychological point of view, as a manifestation of a certain state of mind; it is also interesting for us, in that it shows once again the impotence to which modern philosophy, the denier of true metaphysics, condemns itself by the very way in which it poses the questions. But how distressing it is to think that in our time, we so easily mistake what is merely sentimental verbiage for the expression of a superior and profound thought!

• Giovanni Gentile – *The Spirit, pure act*

Translated from the Italian by Miss A. Lion.

This work represents another trend in contemporary philosophy, a trend stemming quite directly from Hegel, although the author claims to correct and reform Hegel's conception. For Hegel, reality is thought; for Mr.
Gentile refers to "thinking" (the act); the nuance may seem quite subtle, yet it is attributed paramount importance. "Thinking is activity, and thought is the product of this activity; activity becomes, the effect is." It is therefore essentially a philosophy of becoming: "The mind is neither a being nor a substance, but a constructive process, a development, a continual becoming." It is therefore barely

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It is worth noting that the "pure act" in question here has nothing in common with Aristotle's. This "actualist" idealism appears to us primarily as a strange misuse of dialectic; let us cite at least one typical example: "Thought is inconceivable as thought, and is thought precisely because it is unthinkable… And yet the unthinkable, by the very fact of being unthinkable, is thought, for its unthinkability is a form of thinking. It is not in itself, outside the sphere of our thinking, that it is unthinkable. It is we who think it as unthinkable: it is our thinking that posits it as unthinkable, or rather, it is thinking that posits itself within it, but within it as unthinkable." – It will be easy to understand that this book is rather difficult to read, and it must also be added that the translation is too often incorrect; There are even many words which, because they are too closely modeled on Italian forms, are in French not only useless neologisms, but pure barbarisms: "naturalistic", "objectivized", "psychic", "predictability", "intellectually", and others.

• Georges Groslier – *Ancient Khmer Sculpture*

Illustrated with 175 reproductions outside the text in halftone engraving.

This excellent publication provides, for the first time, a comprehensive overview of Khmer sculpture, at least as far as the current state of archaeological research allows. The author is, moreover, very cautious in his conclusions, and this is entirely justified, as many questions remain far from being definitively resolved. Establishing a rigorous chronology is virtually impossible, and, here as with India, the proposed dates are often only hypothetical. It is also difficult to determine in what form Indian influence first penetrated Cambodia, and whether Brahmanism or Buddhism was the first to take root in the region; for us, however, it is entirely possible that they arrived simultaneously, since they coexisted in India for several centuries. In any case, Mr. Groslier very rightly observes that the two cults often intertwine (the same phenomenon can be seen in other countries, notably Java); it is, moreover, a transformed Buddhism, strongly tinged with Shaivism, as also occurred in Tibet. The author does not dwell on these considerations, which deserved in-depth study, but which only indirectly relate to his subject; he seeks above all to distinguish between external influences and to show at the same time what is truly original in Khmer art. We would only criticize him for having sometimes allowed himself to be a little too influenced in his assessments, although he denies it, by Western aesthetic conceptions and by modern individualistic prejudice; one senses his discomfort with all that is traditional in this art, with its symbolic and ritual character, which is, in our view, its most interesting aspect. – The plates, which make up almost two-thirds of the volume, are quite remarkable (there are hardly two or three which lack a little sharpness, no doubt due to the conditions in which the photographs had to be taken); most of them reproduce unpublished or recently discovered pieces, and they make Khmer sculpture much more fully known than the detached fragments that can be seen in museums.

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April 1926

- **Paul Choisnard – *Saint Thomas Aquinas and the influence of the stars***

It is undeniable that Saint Thomas Aquinas is "in fashion", and perhaps his doctrine has never been the subject of so much work of all kinds; yet there are aspects of this doctrine that seem to be deliberately left in the shadows.
Some contemporary Thomists, who protest against the label "neo-Thomists" and consider themselves very "anti-modern," are, in reality, still too modern in their minds to understand the cosmology of Saint Thomas, or even simply to see the difference between the viewpoints of ancient and medieval physics and those of today—a difference so vast that there is no reason to consider either opposition or reconciliation between them. All the more reason, then, for these same Thomists to refuse to hear of matters such as astrology, and they must be rather embarrassed when they are forced to acknowledge that Saint Thomas very explicitly affirmed the reality of the influence of the stars. Thus, the present work, far from duplicating any other, fills an important gap. The author has grouped under several headings the principal passages of the *Summa Theologica* that relate to this question; And, in each chapter, he has followed the reproduction of the texts with commentaries which, on the whole, seem perfectly accurate to us. There is only one reason to express reservations about what is, here too, too modern in some interpretations; we are referring to Mr. Choisnard's tendency to equate his own conception of astrology with that of Saint Thomas Aquinas or Ptolemy. Now, the conception of "scientific astrology" as founded primarily on "statistics" and "probabilities," so as to constitute an "experimental science" in the sense we understand it today, is certainly very far removed from ancient astrology, which rested on entirely different foundations; and, if this new astrology is an attempt to rejoin that of the ancients, it takes a very circuitous route to get there. On the other hand, we do not believe that the true meaning of the concept of causality is that indicated by Mr. Choisnard, where we find the confusion between "cause" and "condition" that is usually the result of a certain empiricism. Nevertheless, such work is very useful, as it can help correct the narrowness of current interpretations of Thomism, and this effort is all the more commendable because it goes against many prejudices.

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October 1926

• Georges Dwelshauvers – *Subconscious Mechanisms*

This small volume may give an idea of what laboratory psychology is currently like; opinions may differ on the value of the results to which so much patient and meticulous research leads, and, for our part, we would be tempted to express many reservations on this subject. In any case, here is how the author defines the question he has considered more specifically: “The experiments on which our study is based have focused primarily on the image and on movement in their relation to the conscious action of its goal, that is to say, on the one hand with attention and reasoning, and on the other hand with voluntary innervation.” "It should be noted that Mr. Dwelshauvers is clearly an opponent of Freudianism, which he does not name, but to which he makes a fairly clear allusion in these lines, the severity of which does not seem excessive to us: 'When, through distraction or fatigue, I go to the wrong door or write one word for another, it would be fanciful to interpret this clumsiness as an indication of unconscious tendencies that would drive me to act without my knowledge. This kind of psychology seems to me to correspond to the same mentality as that of mysterious people who consult a fortune teller about their future.'"

March 1927

• Bishop C.-W. Leadbeater, Regional Bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church for Australia – *The Science of the Sacraments*

Translated from English.

The title should not mislead: this is not a Catholic book, but a theosophical one, and the so-called "Liberal Catholic Church" is merely one of the organizations intended to prepare for the coming of the new Messiah who has been heralded for some years now. Like all the author's works, this one consists entirely of assertions based on the exercise of a highly suspect faculty of "clairvoyance"; it is a rather curious example of certain pseudo-mystical extravagances that unfortunately enjoy some success in our time.

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- **E. Francis Udny, priest of the Liberal Catholic Church – *Early Christianity in the Gospel of the Twelve Saints***

Translated from English.

We initially assumed that this small volume, from the same source as the previous one, must contain one of the many apocryphal Gospels; but it didn't take us long to realize that it was nothing more than a simple hoax. This supposed "Gospel of the Twelve Saints," kept in a Tibetan monastery and then transmitted "mentally" to an Anglican priest, is intended to introduce into Christianity (by claiming that they were once removed from the canonical Gospels) the idea of reincarnation and the vegetarian and anti-alcohol teachings dear to the Theosophists. The deception is rather crude; and what's even better is that we are led to believe that a "new and better Bible" is imminent, no doubt arranged entirely in the same way!

July-August 1927

- **R. Schwaller de Lubicz – *The Call of Fire***

Mr. René Schwaller, a dissident theosophist who was one of the leaders of the short-lived group "The Watchers", has gathered in this book, in a form which aims to be poetic, but which is sometimes incorrect or unintelligible, considerations touching on quite diverse subjects: language, society, religion, science, life.

There are a few glimmers of light amidst a lot of grandiloquent nonsense; one of the author's dominant ideas seems to be that of the imminence of the "end of the world"; he is not alone in announcing it; but it would still be good to explain, more clearly than he does, in what sense it should be understood exactly.

- **Jean Baruzi – *French Philosophers and Scholars of the 20th Century, Extracts and Notes. – III. The Moral Problem***

The presentation of the texts gathered here seems to have been quite heavily influenced by the idea of the predominance of the theories of Durkheim's sociological school, which surprised us somewhat coming from Mr. Baruzi. Undoubtedly, the existence of these theories is a fact that must be taken into account, at least historically; but alongside them, there are other, quite different and even opposing, tendencies. Why give the impression that these are of lesser importance, that they exist, so to speak, only in relation to what we might readily call "sociologism"? The overall perspective

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can be distorted, and that is why it is difficult for us to consider this volume as a completely faithful picture of the moral conceptions currently in force in the French University.

November 1927

- **Phusis – *Near the Secret of Life, Essay on Universal Morphology***

This small volume, intended to be the first in a new "Scientific Library for Human Improvement," is a typical example of the kind of self-taught work so common in our time. Having accumulated all sorts of knowledge and combined it according to their imagination, they convince themselves that they have made prodigious discoveries and that their "science" is destined to ensure the happiness of humanity. What a waste of effort and what a squandering of an activity that would have found a far better use in more modest tasks, but ones of less questionable utility! This, no doubt, is one of the much-vaunted "benefits" of "compulsory education"...

- **Emile Boutroux – *Eternal Truths in Descartes***

Latin thesis translated by M. Canguilhem, with a preface by M. Léon Brunschwieg.

It is an excellent idea to have provided a French translation of this Latin thesis by Emile Boutroux, even though it is merely a historical study of Descartes's singular theory that eternal truths are created by God in such a way that the possible and the impossible exist only because God freely willed them, in the sense of a freedom of indifference. After reading this little book, one can better see how this theory connects to the whole of Cartesian philosophy; but we do not think that, in itself, it appears any better justified. – The preface in which Mr. Brunschwieg provides an overview of Emile Boutroux's philosophy too often lacks clarity; and is it really acceptable to place the question of Franco-German relations on the same level as that of the relationship between science and religion?

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- **RPJ Maréchal, SJ (Philosophical Section of the *Museum Lessianum) – The Starting Point of Metaphysics, lessons on the historical and theoretical development of the problem of knowledge. Notebook V: Thomism in the Face of Critical Philosophy***

The author has set out to confront Thomism with modern philosophy, and, in this case, more specifically with Kantianism. Is this not to attribute excessive importance to purely artificial "problems," and is there really any reason to want to construct a "Theory of Knowledge" on Thomistic foundations? Antiquity and the Middle Ages, which rightly preferred to go directly to knowledge itself, were scarcely troubled by such questions; and we do not see that metaphysics truly needs such a "starting point." Moreover, although we are hardly in favor of this mixture of heterogeneous viewpoints and these discussions, which too often lead to rather unfortunate concessions, we nonetheless recognize the considerable merit of this work, all the more difficult because it involves comparing theories expressed in such different languages as possible.

- **PV Piobb – *The secret of Nostradamus***

This is a very curious book, whose author, who believes he has finally found the key to Nostradamus's famous prophecies, has only erred in not explaining clearly enough the method he uses to arrive at certain results, which makes verification difficult. In any case, and despite the reservations that some rather far-fetched deductions might warrant, it seems certain to us that there is a serious basis in the interpretation of the "Centuries" according to a "chrono-cosmographic" system linked to the knowledge of "cyclic laws," because, by a rather remarkable coincidence, we have also been able to observe the existence of something similar in Dante's work. We will also particularly highlight the considerations relating to the mutation of symbols in correspondence with certain historical periods and the chapter devoted to the topography of Paris, which is one of the most interesting, and which relates to what we have called "sacred geography." The predictions concerning the near future are less satisfactory, but this is, whatever some may think, only a very minor application. This work is a welcome change from the usual "occultist" speculations, and it is to be hoped that the author will subsequently develop, as they deserve, various points to which he has only been able to make all too brief allusions.

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December 1927

- **JG Frazer – *The Gods of the Sky***

Translated from English by Pierre Sayn.

The author's theories, based on the gratuitous hypothesis of a primitive "naturalism," are quite well known; therefore, when he speaks of the "gods of Heaven," it is not surprising that he understands this expression in its most literal sense, making these gods mere personifications of the visible sky or of celestial and atmospheric phenomena. For those unwilling to blindly accept such interpretations, works of this kind can only be valued as collections of facts; and even then, one must be wary that these facts can often be distorted by the preconceived ideas of those who report them. Moreover, we question the usefulness of dwelling at such length on the histories of Black tribes, which occupy more than two-thirds of the volume, and most of which simply repeat one another with almost insignificant variations; it is truly pushing the mania for detail that characterizes a certain contemporary scholarship to extremes.

- **Paul Choisnard – *Evidence of Astral Influence on Man***

This booklet summarizes various earlier works by the author on astrology, and more specifically on what he calls the "law of astral heredity," a law of which he found a very clear indication in Kepler. Unfortunately, his so-called "scientific" astrology—that is, conceived on the model of modern experimental sciences and relying primarily on statistics and probability theory—appears to us to have only the most distant relationship with authentic traditional astrology, as it was known in antiquity and the Middle Ages; it is important to avoid any confusion between these fundamentally different viewpoints.

April 1928

- **Edouard Dujardin – *The God Jesus, an essay on the origins and on the formation of the Gospel legend***

Here is yet another new hypothesis (the author himself admits that it is nothing more than that) on the origins of Christianity, which he claims was the continuation or "revival" of an ancient Palestinian "mystery religion," whose god, called Jesus (or Joshua), was supposedly immolated and ritually crucified in a "sacred drama" last performed in the year 27 AD. Mr. Dujardin departs from the

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The "mythical" conception, recently supported by Mr. Chouchoud, acknowledges a certain historicity in Jesus, but one which is only a "spiritual historicity." It must be further specified that "spirituality," for him, must be understood in a purely "sociological" sense. He employs both the supposed results of "independent criticism" (read: anti-Christian), Robertson Smith's theory that "rite precedes and produces myth," and Durkheim's theory that "God is the hypostasis of Society." We must await the sequel, as this volume is presented as the first in a series; but we are quite convinced, from what we have already seen, that this hypothesis is merely another fantasy added to many others, and that it has no more substance than the one it purports to replace. These pseudo-scientific constructions, engendered by the intellectual disorder of our time, will all collapse one after the other and, ultimately, the true Christian tradition surely has nothing to fear from them.

- **Georges Lanoë-Villène –** ***The Book of Symbols, dictionary of symbolism and mythology***

This work, the first two volumes of which (letters A and B) have been published, is a truly formidable collection of information from all sources, which would be very difficult to find elsewhere; it is therefore destined to be of great service to all those interested in questions relating to symbolism. The interpretations are sometimes debatable, and, in particular, the author's idea of what he calls "primitive Delphism" seems to us quite hypothetical; but these interpretations themselves are still interesting and suggestive nonetheless, and, in any case, they obviously do not detract from the value of the documentation. There are indeed some factual errors, but, in a work of this kind, this is almost inevitable; there is one, however, which is all the more unfortunate because it is frequently repeated: it is the attribution to Buddhism of ideas, symbols, and texts (notably the *Puranas)* which, in reality, are purely Brahmanical; It is indeed a curious thing, this tendency that most Westerners have to see Buddhism everywhere.

- **Raoul Montandon –** ***Human Radiations, Introduction to the experimental demonstration of the existence of the subtle bodies of man***

This large volume is simply a collection of facts and experiments tending to prove the reality of "radiations," of a more or less indeterminate nature, which are said to emanate from the human body, and more generally, from all living organisms. The subtitle, however, contains a tendentious expression, that of "subtle bodies," which implies the acceptance of certain spiritualist or occult theories, and in which the use of the word "body" denotes a rather crudely materialized conception; wouldn't "forces" be much more appropriate? Moreover, we believe that the phenomena in question are much closer to the simple physiological realm than some seem to suppose; we are also

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While it is far from possible to dispute their reality, we wonder why all works of this kind constantly reproduce dubious or poorly controlled examples that would certainly be better left aside, if only to avoid easy objections. Furthermore, why, of the three figures to whose memory this book is dedicated, are two known spiritualists? This hardly lends itself to the impression of independent research, and if the "metapsychists" are not taken seriously, it must be admitted that their own clumsy statements are largely to blame.

May 1928

• **Louis Lavelle –** ***The Dialectic of the Eternal Present: On Being***

This is a curious essay in ontology, presented in an original form—perhaps too original, since some of the theses it contains, such as that of the "univocity of being," seem rather "heretical." And what to make of the identification of total being with an "infinite individual," especially when it is stated elsewhere that this same totality "can only be an idea"? There are, however, some interesting considerations, particularly those relating to the universal judgment "being is"; but it is all very complicated, and perhaps rather unnecessarily so.
Moreover, contrary to what the title suggests, the question of the relationship between time and eternity is hardly clarified; in particular, the essential distinction between the two meanings of "present", one temporal and the other timeless, is entirely lacking.
Moreover, to put it bluntly, all this "dialectics", however ingenious it may be, strikes us more as a game and seems very "verbal" at heart; how far removed it all is from true knowledge!

• **Augustin Jakubisiak –** ***Essay on the Limits of Space and Time***

Although this thesis appears, from its title, to be of a cosmological nature, it begins with an ontological interpretation of logical principles, which seems to us quite questionable with regard to the application made to "concrete being" and with regard to the assertion of "discontinuity" that one wants to derive from it.
The author then elaborates on the consequences of this interpretation, consequences that are not "metaphysical" as he initially states, but properly "physical" in the etymological sense of the word; more precisely, they are largely "epistemological," meaning they fall primarily within the realm of the philosophy of science as it is understood today. There is therefore a multiplicity of viewpoints, which inevitably leads to some confusion, further compounded by the use of sometimes overly imprecise terminology. There are, however, some remarkable aspects to the critique of certain theories; but why attach so much importance to the current state of science and to certain conceptions?

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which will likely only last for a short time? The constructive part of the work contains some highly questionable assertions: the discontinuity of space, the spatial explanation of number; and the extension of the notions of space and time to all simultaneity and all succession (which is also found in Leibniz) is truly excessive. In the conclusion, the author attempts to reconcile his theory with Christian revelation, and the remarks to which he is led are among the most interesting parts of his book.

September-October 1928

• Bertrand Russell – *Analysis of the Mind*

Translated from English by M. Lefèvre.

This book, the author tells us, arose from an attempt to reconcile two different tendencies: that of psychology, which is becoming increasingly dependent on physiology, and that of physics, which, for its part, is rendering matter less and less "material." One might think, at first glance, that this is a return to ancient conceptions, in which mind and matter were not radically separated from one another as they have been since Descartes; but, in fact, this is not the case, for it is an "empiricist" and "evolutionist" point of view that is purely modern, in the worst sense of the word, and in which what is called "mind" appears to us as something rather "unspiritual" in reality, any faculty superior to the sensible order being denied or passed over in silence. Among the recent psychological theories, "behaviorist" or otherwise, which Mr. Russell examines with the greatest seriousness, there are also some very entertaining ones for anyone who can consider them with complete disinterest; will there not be a Molière to put these pedantic ineptitudes on the stage?

• Ch. Appuhn – *Spinoza*

This volume is part of the "Civilization and Christianity" series, edited by Louis Rougier, which is a continuation of the "Masters of Anti-Christian Thought" series. This means that the extracts from Spinoza that form its main part were chosen not impartially, but with the firm intention of presenting their author in as narrowly "rationalist" a light as possible. In this vein, they even go so far as to make him, rightly or wrongly, the "true inventor" of modern "criticism." The long introduction preceding these extracts is interesting from a historical point of view, but we would draw a conclusion from it that is quite different from that of Mr. Appuhn and much less favorable to Spinoza: namely, that when Spinoza addressed religion, he did so as a "layman," that is to say, as a man who understood nothing about it. We even wonder, in this regard, by what aberration some have sought to present

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like a Kabbalist, the philosopher who wrote that, in his opinion, "high speculations have nothing to do with Scripture," which is precisely the formal negation of Hebrew Kabbalah.

November 1928

- **Mr. Dugard – *On the Frontiers of Faith***

In a preliminary warning, the author implores theologians not to open his book, and rightly so, for his conception of religion certainly has nothing to do with theology. The objections raised against Christianity by "modern thought," and the responses he offers, similarly testify to the mental disarray of our time, and it is for this reason that a work like this holds some interest for us. This "humanized" religion, reduced to mere moral and social concerns, stripped of all doctrinal content and intellectualism, is it truly still a religion? Wouldn't the term "religiosity" be far more fitting for such a collection of vague sentimental aspirations, which a strange illusion leads us to mistake for "spirituality"? Perhaps this is all that a mind steeped in all contemporary prejudices, from the belief in progress to the confusion of intelligence with discursive reason, can admit to as religion. In any case, this so-called "evangelical" Christianity, which doesn't even fully acknowledge the divinity of Christ, closely resembles certain forms of "liberal Protestantism." One feels stifled by these narrow-minded conceptions, which nevertheless pride themselves on "broad-mindedness" and consider themselves far superior to "unchanging traditions!"

- **Edouard Le Roy – *The Idealist Imperative and the Fact of Evolution***

In this book, we see Bergsonian evolutionism aligning itself as clearly as possible with "transformism," and this at a time when, by the author's own admission, the latter has already lost considerable ground. We also find here, perhaps even more frankly expressed than in Bergson himself, assertions such as those of "pure change, sufficient unto itself," and of the "intrinsic substantiality of becoming." We obviously lack the space here to discuss these concepts, but we can at least make the following two remarks on this subject: first, these philosophers triumph a little too easily because they find nothing immutable anywhere in the "physical" realm, that is to say, where indeed it cannot be; second, it is truly strange that they imagine themselves to be doing "metaphysics," when everything they assert amounts precisely to the very negation of metaphysics. Furthermore, one observation is inescapable: those who may have believed that Bergsonism was somehow opposed to "scientism" will have to abandon this illusion; here, on the contrary, it aligns with the

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"Scientism" in its most naive form, the one that takes hypotheses for "facts." All of this will age terribly quickly, if it is not already somewhat "outdated"; we can well use this word, because, in essence, the success of theories of this kind is merely a matter of fashion and nothing more.

March 1929

- **Annie Besant – *The New Civilization***

This small book contains four lectures given in London in June 1927 by the president of the Theosophical Society. According to her, the "new civilization" is that of the "sub-race" currently forming in California, awaiting the arrival of the future "mother race" which is to emerge later in the same region. These fanciful predictions are, in truth, little more than a pretext for humanitarian and "socialist" pronouncements, which do not rise above the ordinary banality of the sermons on "universal brotherhood" heard in such circles.

- **J. Krishnamurti – *Life as an Ideal***

After the "Apostle," here comes the "Messiah" himself, and his lecture is even more banal, if that's possible: a collection of empty, vague phrases, from which the only impression that emerges with any real clarity is that of a kind of intellectual "anarchism." Curiously, while some present the author of these pages as the founder of the religion of the future, he declares that "religions are, in his eyes, merely the frozen thoughts of men" and that "they have, according to him, no relation to truth." One might wonder how his followers will manage to recognize themselves in this chaos of assertions that destroy one another; it is true that contradictions hardly seem to bother them.

- **AE Powell – *The Astral Body***

Yet another book from the same source as the previous two, but of a rather different nature: it is, as the author himself says, a "compilation" of what has already been presented on the subject in other theosophical works, notably in those of "Doctor" Annie Besant and "Monsignor"
Leadbeater. There you will find all the fantastic assertions of the "clairvoyants"; and, seeing them thus gathered and summarized, one becomes even more clearly aware of the grossly material way in which these people represent all things to themselves.

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November 1929

• **J.A. Count de Gobineau – *Religions and Philosophies in Central Asia***

(1 vol. from the "Library of Scholars").

It is an excellent idea to have republished one of the most interesting works of Count Gobineau, a writer who has remained too little known in France; he is certainly much talked about, at least for some time now, but most often without having read him. The situation is quite different in Germany, where his theories on race are exploited for political ends, theories which may contain a grain of truth, but mixed with a great deal of fantasy. The idea of an "Indo-Germanism" does not stand up to scrutiny, for there is absolutely nothing in common between India and Germany, neither intellectually nor from any other point of view. However, Count Gobineau's ideas, even when they are false or fanciful, are never indifferent; they can always provide food for thought, and that is already a great deal, whereas reading so many other authors leaves one with only an impression of emptiness.

Here, moreover, the focus is not so much on theories as on an account of facts that the author was able to witness quite directly during his stays in Persia. The title might be misleading regarding the book's content: it deals not at all with the rather varied regions usually grouped under the name of Central Asia, but solely with Persia; and the "religions and philosophies" discussed are essentially limited to the more or less specific forms that Islam took in that country. The main and central part of the book consists of the history of that Muslim heresy known as Babism; and it is worthwhile to read this history to see how little Babism resembled its supposed continuation—we mean the sentimental and humanitarian "adaptation" made of it under the name of Baha'i, for the use of Westerners, and particularly Anglo-Saxons. This section is framed by two others, the first containing general considerations on Persian Islam, while the latter is devoted to theater in Persia. The latter's interest lies primarily in its clear demonstration that, there as in ancient Greece and medieval Europe, the origins of theater are essentially religious. We even believe this observation could be generalized further, and there is undoubtedly much to be said on the subject; the creation of a "secular" theater appears, in a way, as a deviation or a degeneration. And might there not be something analogous to all the arts?

As for the general considerations mentioned at the beginning, they would require a much longer discussion than we can undertake here; we must limit ourselves to pointing out some of the most important aspects. One of the most debatable views is that which explains the particularities of Islam in Persia by a kind of survival of Zoroastrianism; we, for our part, see no basis for this.

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There is no precise trace of such an influence, which remains purely hypothetical and even rather improbable. These particularities are sufficiently explained by the ethnic and mental differences that exist between Persians and Arabs, just as those observed in North Africa are explained by the characteristics specific to the Berber races. Islam, much more "universalist" than is commonly believed, carries within itself the possibility of such adaptations, without any need to invoke foreign infiltration. Moreover, the division of Muslims into Sunnis and Shiites is far from having the rigidity attributed to it by the simplistic conceptions prevalent in the West. Shiism has many degrees, and it is so far from being exclusively specific to Persia that one could say that, in a certain sense, all Muslims are more or less Shiite; but this would lead us into overly lengthy discussions. As for Sufism, that is, Muslim esotericism, it exists just as much among the Arabs as among the Persians, and, despite all the assertions of European "critics," it is linked to the very origins of Islam: it is said, in fact, that the Prophet taught the "secret science" to Abu Bakr and Ali, and it is from them that the different schools proceed. Generally speaking, the Arab schools primarily claim Abu Bakr as their source, and the Persian schools Ali; and the main difference is that, in the latter, esotericism takes on a more "mystical" form, in the sense that this word has acquired in the West, while, in the former, it remains more purely intellectual and metaphysical. Here again, the tendencies of each of the races are sufficient to account for such a difference, which, moreover, is much more in the form than in the substance of the teaching, at least as long as the latter remains in accordance with traditional orthodoxy.

Now, one might ask to what extent Count Gobineau succeeded in penetrating the Oriental mindset; he was certainly what one might call a good observer, but we do not believe we are being unfair to him in saying that he always remained an observer "from the outside." Thus, he noted that Orientals easily move from one doctrinal form to another, adopting this one or that one according to the circumstances; but he saw in this only the effect of an aptitude for "dissimulation." That, in certain cases, prudence does indeed impose a kind of dissimulation, or what can pass for such, is undeniable, and one could find many examples of this even outside the Orient; the language of Dante and other medieval writers would provide them in abundance; but there is also, for facts of this kind, a completely different reason, of a much deeper order, and one that seems to completely escape modern Westerners. The truth is that this detachment from outward forms always implies, at least to some degree, an awareness of the essential unity concealed beneath the diversity of those forms; this is something quite different from hypocrisy, which, under these conditions, can no longer exist, even where the superficial observer detects its appearance, since passing from one form to another then has scarcely more importance than changing clothes according to the time or place, or speaking different languages depending on one's interlocutors. Count Gobineau certainly did not understand this, and one cannot, moreover, blame him for it; but a book that raises such questions, even without its author's knowledge, cannot be an indifferent book, and this is the justification for this

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As we said at the beginning, there is always something to think about, which is, all things considered, the greatest benefit that reading can and should provide us.

December 1929

• Georges Lanoë-Villène – *The Book of Symbols, dictionary of symbolism and mythology (Letter C)*

We have already discussed here (April 1928) the first two volumes of this important work; we could, with regard to the third, repeat the same praise concerning the abundance and variety of the documentation, and also the same reservations concerning the somewhat fanciful nature of certain interpretations and the inadequacy of others. For example, in the chapter devoted to the caduceus, we find neither the true meaning of the serpent nor that of the staff indicated, which would have been absolutely essential, while there is, on the other hand, a wealth of information that relates only rather indirectly to the subject; elsewhere, the author demonstrates the most complete misunderstanding of *the Apocalypse,* in which he sees simply a "book of controversy," which is quite astonishing coming from a symbolist; and there are many other gaps of the same kind. Fortunately, let us repeat, this does not detract from the documentary value of this work, in which information is gathered that would often be very difficult to discover elsewhere, and which, as such, will be of great service to those interested in the issues it deals with; it is only regrettable that the publication is proceeding so slowly.

• Edouard Le Roy – *Human Origins and the Evolution of intelligence*

This collection of lectures given at the Collège de France by the successor of Mr. Bergson, like the previous one we reviewed here (November 1928)* , is entirely devoted to the exposition and defense of a transformist theory, this time applied more specifically to the human species. The observations we made, particularly concerning the confusion of a hypothesis with a fact, therefore still apply; and even if we had enough space to discuss these matters in detail, we would scarcely have the courage: it all seems terribly outdated! It is rather amusing, but perhaps also a little sad, to note that transformism finds its last defenders to be two Catholics: Mr. Le Roy and Father Teilhard de Chardin, whose

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* *[The Idealistic Demand and the Fact of Evolution.]*

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The collaboration seems so close that one could truly say that they think together… Let us only add that Mr. Le Roy's language is sometimes quite extraordinary: for example, one chapter is entitled "The noosphere and hominization"; elsewhere, it is said that "the pre-man had arboreal behavior", which simply means that he lived in trees; what need is there to use such jargon?

• S. Radhakrishna – *Hinduism and Life*

(Translated by P. Masson-Oursel).

The Orient presented to Westerners often bears only a very distant resemblance to the true Orient, even when the presentation is made by people who are, in fact, Orientals by birth, but more or less completely Westernized. Such is the case with this little book; the "critical" opinions of European scholars, and also the tendencies of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, with its "moralism" and "religious experience," certainly hold a much larger place than orthodox Hinduism in the author's ideas, who seems to have little knowledge of the traditional spirit; and this will come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the "reformist" movement of the "Servants of India" with which he is associated. What is particularly unfortunate is that the fact that a work like this is signed with a Hindu name is very likely to mislead the uninformed public and could contribute to instilling in them all sorts of false notions. The best part, or rather the least bad, is the section towards the end that deals with the institution of castes; even then, the underlying reasons for this are far from being clearly explained. The translation is sometimes quite flawed: for example, on page 34, the French should not say "the tenants" but "the holders" of an opinion; on page 40, the English word "immaterial" should not be translated as "immatérielles" but as "without importance," which is not at all the same thing; on page 47, a "join" is not used.

argument, we "refute" it; p. 65, the words "intransigence" and "privation" are used in a way that is completely unintelligible; p. 93, "occupational" is a pure barbarism, etc.

• François Arouet – *The end of a philosophical parade: the Bergsonism*

However flimsy Bergson's philosophy may be, we do not believe it can be overcome by dubious jokes or by opposing it with conceptions even emptier and more nebulous than itself. The author of this pamphlet, who saw fit to adopt Voltaire's real name as a pseudonym, seems to have such confused ideas that we could not ascertain what he meant by "concrete" and "abstract," although these words recur constantly in his writing. Ultimately, the true reasons for the hatred (the word is not too strong) he harbored for Mr. Bergson are far more political than intellectual, as becomes clear at the end of his diatribe: what he ultimately reproaches him for,

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It is about being a "bourgeois philosopher" and having played the role during the war of "a puppet whose strings were pulled by the General Staff"; all of this is of little interest.

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Published in *Les Cahiers du mois*

June 1926

• *The Tibetan poet Milarepa, his crimes, his trials, his nirvana*

Translated from Tibetan with an introduction by Jacques Bacot, forty woodcuts Jean Buhot, based on a Tibetan iconography of the life of Milarepa (Bossard).

This is a work that offers a striking departure from the purely scholarly pursuits to which Orientalists usually confine themselves. This, moreover, should not surprise those readers of the *Cahiers du Mois* who are familiar with Mr. Bacot's response—certainly one of the best—to the survey in *Appels de l'Orient*.* , and who have already been able to see from this how far he is from sharing the ordinary prejudices of the West and from accepting the ready-made ideas that are prevalent in certain circles.

The text translated by Mr. Bacot is a biography of Milarepa, first a magician, then a poet and hermit, who lived in the 11th century AD, and who still has successors today, authentic heirs to his teachings transmitted orally through an unbroken spiritual lineage. This biography takes the form of a narrative told by Milarepa himself to his disciples, after he had attained sainthood and reached the end of his life of trials. All the events recounted, even the seemingly least important, have a mystical meaning that constitutes their true value; and moreover, as the translator very rightly observes, "the mystical interpretation given to a fact does not invalidate its authenticity." Even the details that may seem most improbable to the ordinary reader can nonetheless be true. It is certain, for example, that "the self-mortifications to which a Tibetan ascetic can devote himself far exceed what the European imagination conceives as possible." Generally speaking, "it is regrettable that the Western mindset is so quick to declare absurd what it does not understand, and to dismiss as fable everything that does not conform to its own credulity." One should not forget the considerable distance that separates a man like Milarepa from a Westerner, especially a modern Westerner, both intellectually and in terms of matters requiring conditions impossible to achieve in a contemporary European context.

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* [February-March 1925 issue. René Guénon had also sent a letter in response to this survey.]

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We have just borrowed a few phrases from the truly remarkable introduction with which Mr. Bacot preceded his translation, and in which he demonstrates a truly exceptional understanding. Indeed, we could not have said it better ourselves, and what he expresses coincides perfectly with what we have always maintained; we are particularly pleased to note this agreement.

Thus, Mr. Bacot emphasizes "the gap that exists between the Eastern and Western meanings of each word," noting that "nothing is as fallacious as this transposition of terms from one religion to another, from one way of thinking to another: the same vocabulary for different concepts." Therefore, the word "mysticism," if we insist on retaining it, cannot have the same meaning here as in the West: Eastern mysticism, or what is called by that name, is active and deliberate, while Western mysticism is rather passive and emotional; and, "as for the very principle of meditation in which Milarepa absorbed himself for most of his long life, it still does not fit with any of our methods and philosophies."

We cannot resist the pleasure of reproducing a few more excerpts, dealing with essential and very general points: “What is astonishing is that, without claiming to be a revelation, without appealing to feeling, the pure idea has captivated countless peoples and maintained its allure throughout the centuries… Buddhist compassion has no relation to sensibility. It is entirely objective, cold, and linked to a metaphysical conception. It is not spontaneous, but the result of long meditations.” Teachings like those of Milarepa “do not have the social value or the timeliness of our ‘sound philosophy,’ which is a strength in the eyes of us practical Europeans, and a weakness in Eastern eyes, proof of relativity, because they see social necessities as a very meager contingency.” Moreover, although it may seem paradoxical to those who do not delve into the matter, “Eastern idealism is more morally advantageous, more socially practical, than our realism.” One need only compare the spirituality and gentleness of the peoples who have inherited the Indian ideal (for the teachings in question here, despite their distinctly Tibetan nature, are inspired by India) with the materialism and incredible brutality of Western civilization. Centuries have tested the theoretical charity of Asia. Participating in the absolute, it does not risk the rapid collapse in which the law of love for one's neighbor is lost—a law ignored between nations, abolished between classes of individuals within the same nation, and even between individuals themselves. But everything could be quoted; we must limit ourselves…

As for the text itself, it is impossible to summarize it, as that would only give a far too incomplete, if not inaccurate, idea. It must be read, and read while never losing sight of the fact that this is not simply a tale of more or less romantic adventures, but above all a teaching intended, as the original title expressly indicates, to "show the path to Deliverance and Omniscience."